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SCENES FROM LIFE IN CAIRO

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A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE CURTAIN

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BY

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'In one hand she held a reed pen, and in the other a piece of rather thick writing-paper doubled in two.'—*Page* 3.

PREFACE.

THIS narrative is in a great measure taken from real life, and though the story itself and many of the characters are fictitious, not a few of the conversations are literally true. The Hareem depicted is undoubtedly an exceptional one; but, as the proverb says, exception proves the rule. That the system is bad, and is one of the chief hindrances to improvement in Egypt, no one who really knows anything of the subject can for a moment deny. That recent events may, under Divine guidance, prove a means of opening the doors to education and civilization more than has ever been the case since the Moslem invasion, is the sanguine hope of all true lovers of Egypt. But the Gospel alone can bring the highest and truest wisdom and freedom.

Without that heavenly light, civilization is a fair blossom, but it will not bring forth fruit for the great hereafter. May those who are now drinking of the brackish desert streams of self-righteousness and error, be led by ways that they know not to drink of the healing water, and to say of Him who came to save, "With Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light."

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FROM THE SEATTLE PUBLIC

BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

CHAPTER I.

SHE DWELT IN MARBLE HALLS.

IT was a hot afternoon in spring, and the apartments of a large house in a retired and old-fashioned street in Cairo were as quiet as they usually were when summer had set in with its burning sceptre. The natives of the land are not quite insensible to the hot winds of spring, and if a very strong or long-continued one blows, even a sturdy peasant, trudging cheerfully under a heavy burden in the sun, will give a sort of puff or sigh of relief, as she casts aside her basket or bundle, and sits down in the shade, remarking, "The world is hot to-day! By the Prophet, the world is hot!"

But many of the occupants of the house we are now about to enter were of alien blood, and consequently much more sensitive to heat than real Egyptians. It was the abode of a widow lady of mixed race, Turkish and Circassian, though most of her life had been

passed in Egypt. She was mistress, not only of the hareem or female apartments, but of the building itself, which had been part of the handsome portion she brought her husband on their marriage; for the lady Fatmeh had been the only child of a wealthy pasha. Her son, when not absent on business, generally resided with her, and the strongest attachment existed between them. He visited the estates left him by his father frequently, but made his chief home with his mother.

On this afternoon, except for servants and the steward and secretary, who resided on the ground-floor, the dwelling was entirely tenanted by women, as their busy tongues would have made apparent a little earlier in the day. In the passage near the kitchen a fat negress lay fast asleep on a bench; for although heat is what the dark-skinned children of the interior of Africa rejoice in and thrive upon, they like a good deal of sleep on warm days. A little further was a large anteroom, where upon a mat were two or three more black women, whom it would have taken a strong shaking to rouse, and on the handsome silk-covered divan of one of the best rooms a couple more were stretched, with their long arms over the cushions, very much at their ease. In the smaller rooms—which, in the Turkish style, opened into the larger ones, and had curtains instead of doors—several white women of different ages were asleep also, either on carpets or mats. Their pale faces, and brown or even

light hair in some cases, showed them to be of Circassian race.

The lady of the mansion, a dignified and pleasant-looking woman, somewhat past middle age, was reclining amid a heap of cushions, while a young negress of ten or twelve years sat beside her with a fly-flap, to keep away the little tormentors, which even the shade of the latticed windows could not entirely banish. A long pipe, with a richly-ornamented stick, had dropped from her hand when she fell asleep, and lay beside her; for the little cigar had not yet driven out the stately chibouk in that rather old-fashioned abode.

Not a sound was to be heard, save the occasional swish of the fly-flap, or a snore from one of the slumbering negresses; yet there was one member of the family who was neither asleep, nor yet, strange to say, engaged in the favourite hareem occupation of doing nothing. In one of the smaller rooms, from which the heavy brocaded curtain was fastened back (had any one been awake to observe her) a lady might have been descried seated on the divan, her feet gathered up, and her delicate little slippers on the mat beside her, a small inlaid table near, upon which was a silver inkstand of oriental shape; in one hand she held a reed pen, and in the other a piece of rather thick writing-paper doubled in two. On this she was slowly tracing characters, looking from time to time at a copy-slip which was placed on her knee. (In the East

they do not write on tables or desks.) Patiently she continued her occupation till the paper was full, and then, laying it down with an air of satisfaction and innocent pride at such an achievement, she took up another sheet and proceeded to repeat her copy.

The lady who was engaged in this unwonted employment was young and lovely; she would have seemed to Western eyes from eighteen to nineteen years old, and was therefore probably fifteen or sixteen. She was not Egyptian, but of that famed Circassian race which, although by no means always so beautiful as is generally imagined, yet furnishes occasionally the finest type of physical beauty, and if it generally presents an unintellectual and sleepy expression, the wretched system of hareem life is to be blamed. In the present instance more than usual intelligence was shown in the large, soft, brown eyes and finely-marked brow, and the head, from which dark-brown locks fell on the shoulders, only confined by a slight kerchief of amber-coloured gauze, was finely developed, and showed sense as well as beauty; her complexion was clear and delicate, with a slight rose tint on the cheeks, but not so fair as some of her countrywomen. She was dressed in a loose summer robe of cream-coloured Persian silk, with a narrow crimson stripe, as thin and light as muslin, and the open sleeve flung back to enable the writer to pursue her occupation unfettered, displayed arms and hands that a sculptor would have liked to model. At length, her second page filled,

the lady put aside her papers and began to read in a low voice from a small richly-bound volume of poems in Arabic, which she apparently had read before, as she seldom hesitated, though now and then she paused to spell a word less familiar than the rest. While thus occupied, an elderly negress, stout and well clad, as are slaves in a wealthy family, came softly into the room, laying aside her slippers at the door, and walking as if on eggs to avoid rousing the older lady within.

"Now, my eyes!"—a favourite Eastern form of endearment—she said, after watching the fair scholar for a minute in silence, "what art thou studying for, now, at this time of day, instead of sleeping? It will hurt thy head, lady of my heart!"

The writer looked up, smiling affectionately at her husband's nurse, for such was the negress, and replied, closing her book as she spoke, "I slept for an hour, my good Amneh. I am not so heavy for sleep as those," pointing to the slaves in the anteroom.

"The lazy cattle!" said the nurse, "why was not one of them standing here, my child, to fan thee and drive away flies?"

"Oh, I care not for them; I write better when quite alone; and my lord will be pleased with me when he sees how well I have written!"

"Mashallah! he may well be pleased with thee; but what is the good of a woman learning to read and write? The Mollah comes behind the curtains to read the

Koran in the fast and at festivals, and a blind man can recite poems and songs. What can my lady want more?"

"To please her lord, Amneh, after his taking the pains to teach me, how could I be less than diligent."

"True, my sweetest; but the Bey does not want you to be tired to death, so now drink this sherbet," taking a crystal goblet from an inferior slave, who came to the doorway at her sign, "and rest a little;" and she moved the stand, and gently stroked the silky locks of hair that strayed over the cushions, as her young mistress lay back upon them, with a good-humoured smile.

At this moment the voice of the elder lady was heard from within; she had roused from her nap: "Amneh, tell them to prepare the bath for me; and is the young lady awake?"

"Yes, truly, she has been writing this hour past," replied the nurse, giving a knowing twist to the yellow muslin handkerchief that crowned her sable brows, and sauntering into the other room with that air of easy familiarity peculiar to slaves in the East.

"Indeed, Sitt Fatmeh," she observed, "I wish the Bey would be content as others are and let his lady play with jewels, look at herself in the glass, and leave books to the Sheikhs!" Sitt Fatmeh laughed—"Tell me, Amneh, are there many like my son?"

"Not one that I ever saw!"—

"The name of the All Powerful be on him! Is he like

the rest who take one wife after another? Does he not make thy young lady as a queen? Did he not promise when he married her, not to take another; and did he not teach her to read that she might be fit company for him?"

"I repent of my rash words, Mistress; the Bey is one of a thousand indeed; God keep Ain el Hayāt (pronounced *ine* el hayat) and him for a hundred years, and may they see their children's children."

"Amen," replied the mother solemnly, and then rising, she beckoned her attendants who were one by one returning to life, and went to refresh herself with a bath.

Scarcely had she taken her departure, when a clapping of hands was heard below, and a black boy presently came up, saying that the frank lady had called to see Sitt Ain el Hayat, if she were disposed to receive her. "Certainly," said the lady with a bright look which showed the visitor to be really welcome, and the heavy, thick, mysterious-looking hareem curtain, which hung at the entrance of the forbidden staircase, was lifted just sufficiently to allow of one person at a time to pass, and the visitor followed the servant to the apartment where her friend was rising to meet her. She was a lady in European dress of quiet subdued colours, but not in mourning, and of rather doubtful age, not young, certainly. Her whole bearing had the decision of a person of experience, and a silver hair here and there gleamed amid the

glossy braids of dark hair under her simple straw travelling hat; but the figure was as light and the step as springy as that of a girl, and though when silent, the lines of care as well as years showed in the face, yet when she spoke and smiled, the bright countenance, some might have said, was almost too bright for a middle-aged widow, and yet such she was.

Her married life had been very brief, though very happy. By slow degrees her natural elasticity, aided by living faith, made her almost as bright as before her great trial, so her friends said (perhaps she kept her dark hours to herself.)

Certain it was that she lived to make others happy, and having good health and an active temperament, she was therefore happier than many others. Mrs. Hillyard was, to all intents and purposes, an Englishwoman, and gloried in her father's country and institutions. Nevertheless, she was not only born in Egypt, but had oriental blood. The large bright eyes had a look not often found in the northern races, so dark a hazel as to look black at night, with the long lashes and marked eyebrows of the south. She was still a handsome woman, but her dress, though in good taste, was so extremely simple, that it was evident that making the best of herself was about the last thing which entered her thoughts. She appeared as welcome as flowers in May to her hareem friend at any rate, and was received with cordial smiles and beaming eyes, which meant a great deal more than the

polite phrases which would equally have been uttered to an indifferent guest as matters of decorum.

"It is good that you are here, dearest Sitt," exclaimed the fair Circassian when they were seated on the divan holding her hand as she spoke; "it is long since I have seen any one I care to talk to."

"Ah, but I see my young sister has been studying," replied the guest, pointing to the folded papers and books.

"Yes, truly; do you know that my lord has been teaching me to write? I learned to read with him the first year we were married, and now he is teaching me writing also, and to read poetry, and he told me such wonderful things about the stars and moon. Only think, Sitt Irene, he saw them in a great glass which shows distant things, and he told me about it yesterday."

Mrs. Hillyard knew that to a hareem lady surrounded by ignorance as by a thick fog, a man who was acquainted with the first rudiments of astronomy even would appear a marvel of wisdom and learning, provided she had intelligence enough to appreciate learning at all. But she knew also that the Bey was really a well-informed man, and not a mere tyro, and that he had read a good deal in French and English, as well as Arabic and Turkish (in which last there are few books indeed). She warmly congratulated her young friend, and observed how very few in her position were equally fortunate.

"Few? dear Sitt, there is not one; no one ever was like my lord. See now, till I was married I did not know what it was to have any one to care for me really. The princess who brought me up was kind, but I saw her seldom; she had plenty of white slaves like me, whom she treated very well, and gave fine clothes to, and sometimes jewels on the festivals; but I never seemed to belong to any one in particular. There were such numbers of us all without a single relation, not even knowing our parents' names or languages, never having had a brother or sister, or any one that was our own blood!"

"I thought you Circassians did not care, so long as you had a good place, with riches and luxury," said Mrs. Hillyard, who wanted to bring out all that was in her friend's mind, as this was a subject on which she was usually reserved, and she wanted not to lose the opportunity.

"Oh, Sitt, all are not alike! I think most do not care at all, but some have hearts," pressing her pretty hands to her own as she spoke, and the sweet gazelle eyes lighting up with feeling; "you know there are thousands of us who are thus alone in the world, either stolen or sold as little children; and I need not tell one like you, who are wise, that there are things in hareem life not very nice. This country has its customs, and we just take things as we find them usually; but sometimes, Sitt Irene, when we were in the country palace and I was quite young, and allowed

to run about a good deal, where there is that large garden, I used to see the gardener and his wife and their children sitting under the great apricot tree, dining together, and I felt something rise in my heart when I looked at them ; the fare was coarse, and the clothes ragged, but they laughed and chatted, and ate out of one dish, the man and his wife and his little ones, and the baby went from the father to the mother and played ; they seemed happier than the people in the grand saloons, with us, where there are so many women together, so often quarrelling and envying, and so on. I used to think, had I ever a father who took me on his knee like that ?"

"You told me you were stolen," said her visitor.

"I was, certainly ; I can just recollect a man coming to the door of a house where I was playing, and offering me sugar-plums ; my poor grandmother did not see well, and was not near the door. So I followed him, and he coaxed me round the corner, then suddenly threw something over my face, and rode away with me. I was told by an old woman afterwards, that the sweets were probably drugged, and that was why I forgot everything till I was on the ship, on the way to Stamboul, and a merchant of slaves brought me here, when the Princess Fatmeh bought me. But I talk too much, and you have not had sherbet yet."

Mrs. Hillyard would rather have the story than an ocean of sherbet, and said so ; but the gentle hostess would not incur the blame of being remiss, and

clapped her hands, at which a white slave showed herself, a middle-aged, rather sulky-looking, but very clean person, who, in her turn, summoned a black girl bearing the silver tray with vases of rose sherbet. When this ceremony was over, and the visitor had declared she did not smoke, she prevailed on the fair Ain el Hayat to continue.

"About what? The gardener's family? Oh, there was nothing to tell, only the sort of empty feeling in my heart when I thought myself like one of the roses on a bush; if it falls to pieces, we pick another; they are alike; and though we are used to look on jewels and dress and wealth in every way as the greatest, best thing, it was not enough, somehow, I thought."

"And even," added her friend, "that the poor might be happier without it, if they had love; it was love you wanted, dear Sitt."

"Yes, and I never thought of having that in marriage. You know the sort of love I wished for was not merely the love given to a favourite wife for a short time where there are others, and she is only the best liked by her husband, and hated by the rest. I longed for a peaceful feeling all round me, as if I was very dear to some one, and no hatred or jealousy in the house. Well, when the princess said she wished to give me in marriage to the son of a pasha whom she heard very well spoken of, and asked if I were willing, what could I do? The customs do not, of course, allow a girl to see her bridegroom beforehand,

and she would be angry if I refused, although she said she would not oblige me. I hung my head, and said nothing. She laughed, and said, 'Like all the maidens, shy as a gazelle. But, never mind, little one, few are so lucky, I can tell thee; he has a good character.' Then she dismissed me. I went wandering about the hareem rooms, thinking, What shall I do? In one room I found a stranger negress talking to our black slaves. They said, 'She is the nurse of Zohrab Bey, whose father is seeking a wife for him from the hareem; perhaps our little lady there;' said one of them, laughing, 'I know our mistress sent for her just now.' 'No, I think it is Tofeeda or Ayesha,' said another; 'they are greater favourites.' I was silent, and went away. The negress got up and followed me. 'Wilt thou let me look at thee, sweet lady,' she said, whispering, and asked my name. Then she said, 'It is thou,' and began to congratulate and bless me, and told me how the Bey would be so pleased with me, in their way, you know, words are never wanting. Well, I stopped her, and said, 'I want no fine words, but truth from God. Tell me, is he really good? If you deceive me, it will be bad for all hereafter.' 'By the God of power, lady, I have reared this young man—the name of our prophet be on him—and he is good as no other that I know. And thou art not like other maidens, for they would have said, 'Is he handsome? Will he give me jewels?' He has never thought of marriage, and only cared for his studies;

he is very learned and clever; but his father and mother wished him to marry, and all he said was, 'My father, let the princess give me a lady whom I can love; for I only want one wife.' When I heard this I was full of joy, and said, 'Truly, God is great.'" The speaker paused, and blushed, nor did her friend like to ask of that strange first meeting, when two bound solemnly together first saw each other's face. But after a pause she said,

"God is great, indeed, my sweet sister, and I trust you have the happiness you expected."

"Truly, and more. My lord from the first told me that if I was loving and faithful he would promise never to have another wife with me; and though his mother must be head lady in the hareem, I should tell him everything I wanted, and that she would love me, too. She does; she is an excellent mother-in-law, only she did not like his teaching me to read at first, but he does as he likes. I can read quite fluently now. My mother-in-law wished me, if I learned, to learn Turkish, which is her language; but my father-in-law is an Arab, and he said, 'No; Arabic is best, because the Koran is in Arabic.'"

"Can you read nothing but the Koran?"

"The Bey gave me some poems to read lately—he likes poetry very much—only they are rather hard."

"I thought, perhaps, he might allow you to read the Psalms of David; they are wonderful, and also more profitable than other poems, being from a

prophet's pen." As she spoke, Mrs. Hillyard showed a very neatly-bound and well-printed book, and began to turn over its leaves. Her hostess willingly allowed her to read several verses, and admired them very much. She would not read a word herself without permission, nor did her friend urge it. She knew that with one so young and so ignorant there could not in her country and position, be that full trust and confidence which a European wife expects. It was well that she possessed so much more than others. For a wife to be anything of a companion, even as much as an intelligent little child is to a father or mother, was rare.

After a little further talk, they were interrupted by the return of the mother-in-law from her bath, when, of course, her visitor was obliged to give her attention to the older lady during the remainder of the visit, which had indeed lasted a considerable time; but that is oriental custom, except when calling on the ladies of the royal hareems. While the elaborate salutations and leave-takings are going on, we will introduce the visitor a little more particularly.

CHAPTER II.

A WIDOW INDEED.

MANY years before our story begins, a young English merchant named Hillyard came to reside in Egypt; he was chiefly in Alexandria, and, among other acquaintances, was especially intimate at the house of one of the partners of his firm, a Greek gentleman, who owned a handsome villa near the canal, with a delightful garden. He had come formerly from the Greek islands, and after spending a few years in Syria, where he married a lady of Beyrout, he finally settled in Egypt, and like many of his intelligent and enterprising countrymen, attained wealth, and became a landowner as well as a merchant. Though he never forgot the tongue of his ancestors, and insisted that his children should be able to speak it, the Arabic, which was not only his wife's native language, but also that of their adopted country, Egypt, naturally took the pre-eminence. The speaking two languages, and some dexterity in embroidery and making sweetmeats, were the only things the least approaching to education which his

pretty daughters possessed; their brother had received a fair amount of instruction for the time when high schools were but in their infancy in any part of the East, but Levantine ladies were usually as ignorant as those in hareems, and not one knew her letters in any tongue, though sometimes able to prattle (one can scarcely say to *converse*) in two or three.

However, they had lovely eyes and bright smiles, one especially so, called Zareefa, and the young Englishman was captivated; he had no very near relatives to consult, and within a few weeks of first being introduced to the dark-eyed maiden, he was engaged to her, and shortly afterwards married.

She was amiable, and not naturally stupid; but a very few months proved to her husband that he had made a mistake: a totally uneducated woman could not make an Englishman of his position happy, or be anything of a companion to him. Mr. Hillyard wished at first to teach his lovely bride; but she rebelled against anything that gave trouble, and except a little broken English to talk (not to read), she never learned anything. She was used to a good deal of freedom, and plenty of society; and between friends, sisters, and cousins, was rarely alone; gossip and dress occupied her time, and much of her thoughts. She loved her husband, and admired him; but he was not the sole object of her interest or affection, and her regard was not so intense as

to overcome the languor common to most denizens of hot countries, added to the ridicule of her female companions.

"Books, indeed! What do you want of books, Zareefa? they are only for men. What needless trouble are you taking to learn letters! Does not your husband like you enough as you are? Come, look at this powder for the complexion, it is delicate indeed."

So the aunt or sister would say, and the mother would take another line, and say, "If you tire your head you will be ill; you are not very strong; I cannot permit you to study, my dear child; it is very well for English women, who are peculiar, but it does not suit us, and what is the good?"

Then a baby came, and its appearance was an excuse for the pretty, lazy creature to neglect everything else—even her dress became slatternly, except when she went visiting; meals were irregular, and the house untidy and comfortless to an Englishman's ideas; all for the sake of the child, who yet was always handed to a negress to carry if she cried, and who never met her father's eyes but with a dirty face, and clad in a wretched *muffle* of various handkerchiefs and little jackets. The hot climate made the young wife far more careless and languid than she would have been either in Syria or in Greece, for she was not strong, and was spoiled by those around her.

In these days, a girl with equal exterior attractions and some little education might have been found, though, as yet, instruction is apt to be very superficial, and the Levantine daughter is, as a rule, removed from school just at the time when she is beginning really to profit by the trouble taken with her; but at least there is no longer contempt for education, quite the contrary; forty odd years ago it was a very different state of things.

Mr. Hillyard was far from happy, but he still hoped that a residence in England would improve his ignorant, vapid little wife, and gladly arranged to return thither two years after his marriage; but it was otherwise ordained for him. Zareefa was not well, and the journey was delayed till winter; then the family dreaded the storms and a cold climate, and persuaded him to go without her, and let her follow in summer; but she caught a prevailing fever and died, instead of going to join him. The little girl was only a year and a half old, and the father, having neither mother nor sister, was easily persuaded to leave her with the oriental grandmother for a time, at her entreaty. His conscience reproached him after a while for not sending for his daughter, but she was still so young; what should he do with a baby while living in lodgings? At the end of three years the difficulty was removed by his marriage with a lady in every way fitted to be a kind mother to his child, as well as a helpmeet to himself,

and at her entreaty he wrote at once to bring the little Irene home.

The new mamma was a little taken aback at the first aspect of her young charge—a yellow muslin handkerchief was bound over her head, hiding all her hair in front, while behind it hung down in several little tight plaits; her face looked pinched and sallow, partly from the fatigues of the voyage, but yet more from the injudicious rearing of her grandmother and aunts. Her dress (besides the yellow kerchief) consisted of a faded and rather dirty silk jacket over a shabby old cotton one, and a rich brocaded silk skirt, with sundry stains on it, and much too long, nearly hiding her little red slippered feet (high heels had not yet found their way to Egypt); the only beauty of Irene's face was her fine dark eyes, and even they had a queer startled look in them. But this was only the first "abord;" a few weeks of judicious kindness, and some new clothes, made a great change; and proper diet and out-door exercise soon brought a tinge of healthy bloom to the brunette cheeks. What was still better, the odd, disorderly, uncivilised habits dropped off quickly, especially when the little girl knew English enough to be admitted as scholar to a good day-school, and to associate with other well-trained children.

Her father had given her the name of Irene, for he liked the sonorous Greek names. Her grandparents, indeed, had disputed over the new baby (she had

been their first grandchild), one wishing for a Syrian name, and the other desiring to give her the curious appellation (as it is to our ideas) of Xantippe, after a Greek godmother; for education was at too low an ebb for any of the ladies to be aware that the name was associated with the scolding wife of the famous philosopher; they knew nothing of history, nor, to say truth, did the worthy merchant himself. But the English father had decided on a Greek name chosen by himself, and it was generally approved after all.

The mother's relatives often sent letters asking for a visit from their former pet, but it seemed wisest not to let her education be interrupted for a considerable time, so that she was fifteen when she revisited Egypt with her father and stepmother. The grandparents were then surrounded by a troop of other grandchildren, with whom they got on better than with the complete English girl, who was so unlike the small Irene of old days. They were very kind, but the children, brought up in their own way, naturally suited them better, and the poor old folks (the lady espccially) were rather "put out" that there was no idea of a bridegroom yet, and felt the second mother was not doing her duty. In vain, by aid of her husband's interpreting, did Mrs. Hillyard represent that in England fifteen was the age of a school-girl, and not of a young matron. The grandmother returned to the charge as a green-door to its hinges, and plaintively remarked every day she saw Irene, "Why don't

they find her a bridegroom?" Her uncle had more sense, because he had more education, and as he and his wife had no family, they made a great deal of the English niece, and were very proud of her. After a few months in Egypt the party returned, but as Irene had in a great degree recovered the power of speaking Arabic, which she had lost, her father resolved she should keep it up, as he intended his eldest boy for business in the East, and it would be pleasant for both if the brother and sister studied Arabic together; so he found a teacher in Liverpool, where they resided, and let them take lessons. This made a special tie between Irene and her brother Edmund, who was also the nearest to her in age. It was, however, long ere she again saw the sunny skies and feathery palms of that pleasant land.

When little past twenty she was engaged to be married, and an English home seemed likely to be her lot in life. She had grown up a bright, handsome girl, full of energy and spirits; few, indeed, suspected the depth of feeling and steadiness of purpose which lay beneath these sprightly manners; but a distant relative of her father's, bearing the same name, and like herself a devoted Christian, had learnt to appreciate her fully, and as soon as he saw a prospect of being able to marry he spoke. After a year of waiting and preparation, they were united, and with a moderate competence, active habits, and good health, seemed to have a fair prospect before them; but Irene's married

life as before observed, though happy, was a very brief one.

A sudden sharp malady carried off her husband when they had been only married a little more than a year. As she afterwards told the few to whom she could speak on these subjects, three years comprised all the rose-coloured portion of her life: the acquaintance, gradually ripening into strong attachment, the engagement, and the short period of married bliss.

The pretty newly-furnished home was desolate, and she left it to return to her family; they wanted her, she said, and no one else did particularly. After a time, she found, as Christian women always can, plenty who wanted her besides the dear ones in the family circle, poor, and sick, and afflicted, who learned to bless the sound of her footsteps at their doors. Years passed, and one sister married, and the father died, and then the brother was going to the East, for the second time, taking a wife with him; his first stay had been short, but now he was going to settle. Both brother and sister-in-law were much attached to the widowed Irene, and entreated her to come with them, at any rate, for a time. She agreed, and first in Alexandria, and then in Cairo, resided with them, the first year being followed by another and another, and still they begged her not to leave them. At the end of the fourth year of her Egyptian sojourn, her maternal uncle died; and having no

children, and his widow amply provided for, he left this, his favourite niece, a small estate, which made her quite independent, and though not wealthy, able to do good without the painful struggle and counting of pence which, since her husband's death, had been needful in her charities, having been left with just enough to live on, and but very small margin. She heartily enjoyed her independence, for, though now quite a middle-aged woman, she was a cheerful, happy person, as before remarked.

Her married life had been too short to give a colour to the whole of after life, deep as was the disappointment, it was so quickly cut short,—it had been an *episode* rather than a life in fact. Some wondered that so bright a person had never married again; but that was an idea she had not for a moment entertained. A still more busy life than before, though a very quiet one was hers, after entering into possession of her Egyptian property. It was a pretty place enough, about twelve miles from Cairo, and within easy reach of a large village, and not far from the river. It included a tolerable garden, which she soon made a charming one, and a house which, though built only of mud brick and not even tolerable, was rendered quite habitable and even comfortable, by a moderate outlay. Mrs. Hillyard made it her chief residence, and devoted much time to the sick and poor in her neighbourhood; but she spent some months of each year with her brother who now lived

in Cairo, and occasionally visited her relatives and friends in England.

One of the estates adjoining her little farm was the property of Zohrab Bey, and though the ladies of the family had never stayed there since she had made their acquaintance, the fact of the neighbourhood seemed to add to their friendly feeling. Mrs. Hillyard had been in town with her brother and sister-in-law when she paid the visit related in the last chapter, but hastened back to the country as soon as circumstances permitted, as it was the end of harvest, and the agent wanted to settle accounts with her.

At an early hour, two days afterwards, she was seated at her writing-table, finishing a letter to her only unmarried sister, who resided at Birkenhead with her mother. "Well, Clara," she wrote, "here I am again, in the 'peasants' country,' as you know we call all rural abodes in Egypt. And very glad to get out of the hot, dusty town, though Edmund has a large cool house, to be sure, and not a despicable garden; still I am now used to the country, and like it best in spite of the solitude. Of course there are human beings enough; how these Egyptian villages *swarm* with people to be sure! but no educated or civilised neighbours within twelve miles or more.

"This is my second year here on my own property. The garden is wonderfully improved, though it was pretty fair before; plenty of orange and lemon trees; a tangle of vines and jessamine, roses, and eggplants

in wild confusion, but very delightful; now, more variety and a shade more order reign, and I wish for nothing better.

"But the house was then, as I told you, only mud brick, and not even plastered, and full of all sorts of 'eerie' creatures from long neglect. Now it is clean and sound, and though plainly, and even rudely, furnished (for my barefooted damsels marry as soon as I have trained them, and break a good deal in learning) the *tout ensemble* is most comfortable, and rather tasteful, with my water garden, my last addition, in one window, and flowers and paintings wherever I can put them. The water garden is a large zinc pan, of a neat shape, with water lilies, rice plants, and other watery things, growing in it—so refreshing this hot time of year to look at! You heard, of course, what delayed me so late in town. Edmund wrote to you how there were two cases of bad eyes among the children, so I stayed to help poor Esther, and close work it was in the dark, shut-up rooms for a whole fortnight. If the healthy ones found it trying, what must the poor little suffering darlings have endured? However, it was a comfort to help and cheer them, and now all is over, the bottles of eye-water put away, veils discarded, and happiness returned to the nursery. So yesterday I rose at four, literally and truly, and mounted my donkey, and rode off in the cool, fresh morning, and got here before the heat. Yesterday was taken up with accounts; to-day I have one or two sick to visit,

and am going to breakfast early on that account. The village is too suffocating later in the morning, so Zeynab, my little maid, is trotting about in her pretty, clean print frock, laying my small table, and setting out the beautiful dark purple figs and amber bananas on their green leaves. With a cup of coffee and milk, they form my early meal. My pretty little Aden cow and a long-haired white goat are visible from one of the windows, discussing *their* breakfast in the yard, while numerous fowls and snowy pigeons are pecking about in the glorious sunshine of half-past six o'clock! I wish you and mother could be here to see it; but I must stop my pen pictures, for here comes Zeynab with the milk, calling 'Suffra hadthir!' which means, 'the table is ready,' so adieu for the present."

CHAPTER III.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

IT was scarcely a week after Mrs. Hillyard's visit to the hareem that the females of that secluded abode were busily engaged with the annual arrangements for summer. For a wonder, real activity reigned behind the embroidered curtain, for it was necessary to change the heavy silk and brocade coverings of the endless number of sofas, and to prepare the delicate chintz and white calico used in hot weather; besides, the removal of mats and carpets, &c., occupied several of the negresses, while the white slaves superintended them or sat in the anteroom folding linen from the wash. Two great strapping black damsels, in pink cotton trowsers and jackets, were striding about the marble hall below, splashing it with water, and from the unusual length of their limbs, looking like men in disguise; a fair middle-aged person (the same who came to offer sherbet to Mrs. Hillyard, and who was the personal attendant of Sitt Ain el Hayat) was walking after this pair, to see that they performed their duty properly, mounted upon high pattens of dark wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, to keep the

feet from the wet stones. All were busy, and probably for that reason happier than usual; at any rate, they were more talkative, and the chattering in Turkish among the Circassians (most of whom are accustomed to that language, having been reared in Constantinople) was only second to the clatter of tongues from the more numerous negresses, whose conversation, if we can call it by so dignified a name, was carried on in "slaves' Arabic," a sort of slip-slop or mispronounced Arabic, answering to the "talky-talky" of our West Indian Island negroes.

None of the half-dozen white slaves in this hareem were very young or particularly handsome; all had lived some years with the great lady, as Sitt Fatmeh was usually designated in her own household, and the older ones had passed nearly all their lives with her, and had been so kindly treated, that though she had told them she would find a husband for any who wished to marry—this being not uncommon for ladies of the most respectable class and of generous dispositions to do with slaves who have served them faithfully for several years—only one of those who originally belonged to her had cared to leave a home where she was exceptionally well off for the risk of a new one. She had supplied the vacancy by a plain woman of thirty. But she need not have feared for her son. Though the uncivilised customs of his country allowed several legal wives and as many slave wives as the master chooses, Zohrab Bey had received an edu-

cation which, acting on a character and disposition far above the average of Mohammedan youths, made him look with contempt and dislike on these old customs, and early resolve to be among those who from the first intended to have only one wife. And his mother had taken care to let the princess from whose hands she sought a bride for her beloved son, be informed of this view; the lady of high degree, though aware it was a modern innovation, could not but in her heart approve of it, and picked out the best tempered and most intelligent of the lovely maidens in her establishment. "Now, Sitt Fatmeh," she had said, when receiving the ceremonial visit of thanks for the favour, "I am giving you a gem for a daughter-in-law. I was at first undecided between three nearly of the same age, quite as pretty one as the other, or indeed one of them would be generally more admired than my choice, because she is fairer in complexion, but her temper is sulky; but all the slaves love Ain El Hayat, she is as gentle as a dove." And the mother-in-law, who, though a really kindhearted woman, was by no means a dove herself, had cause to bless the princess very often for the wise selection, both for the sake of her son and herself.

But to return to the hareem on the busy day of summer preparation. The two ladies of the family were not idle; they had to issue commands to the rest; the younger one superintended the folding and putting away of the embroidered towels and napkins,

&c., in one room, while the great lady reclined on a divan in the chief reception room, giving orders to one after another of the attendants. She was cheerful and pre-occupied, so that she had omitted to notice the dulness and sorrowful expression of her daughter-in-law, who went through her directions slowly and mechanically.

Presently a slight noise was heard below, and the younger lady started to her feet, and listening attentively, desired the youngest of the black girls to run and see if the master had returned home, for she said, "I think I hear his footstep downstairs."

"He is coming up, Sitt," exclaimed the messenger, returning from the door with alacrity, for the Bey was at his heels. "Shall I tell them to get coffee? His Honour went out so early this morning, and took no coffee."

"Yes, yes, child, go, and be quick," replied her mistress; and as she spoke the young man entered the apartment where his mother was sitting, and greeted her as usual affectionately, but with an absence of manner which immediately struck her; his face had a gloomy expression, and his step was slow. His wife had risen and come into the room, but she did not share his mother's surprise, as she had already reason to know there was something wrong. He flung himself on the divan without speaking, and while the mother stood looking at him with dismay and curiosity contending in her

features, the younger woman knelt on a cushion at his feet, and gazed at him with wistful tenderness. Zohrab made an effort to recover his composure, and putting his hand lightly on the silky brown tresses, smiled sadly at her, and then at his mother, and then took his wife's hands and placed them both upon his knee. Still she did not speak, but waited and watched.

"Tell us what is wrong, my son; light of my eyes! who has been troubling thee?" exclaimed his mother, the tears coming in other eyes.

"Alas!" said he, "I must leave you both. It is as I feared yesterday; I must go away!"

The mother threw herself beside him on the sofa, groaning, and hid her face in the pillows. "It is very hard mother, and you my sweet love!"

"Oh, my Zohrab, my love; oh, my life, how can I bear it; how can I lose thee?" sobbed the young wife, breaking down at the tender words. She generally used the title of respect in speaking to her husband before others, and always in speaking of him, but now in her agitation she could not recollect that his mother was by, and kept on repeating every epithet that affection and sorrow brought to her lips, regardless of every one else. "My little wife, my poor child, do not cry so, and hurt your sweet eyes; God is great," said Zohrab, stroking the trembling hands still resting on his knee. At this moment the black guardian of the hareem, who was also the confidential

servant of its master, entered the anteroom, and asked leave to speak to the Bey.

"Come in, Osman," said he, rousing himself.

"Your Honour is going to travel so soon that I had better put up your things, I think," said Osman.

"The Bey going to travel!" exclaimed the mother starting from the sofa as if she had not been weeping on that very account. "It cannot be, Osman; surely it cannot be!"

"I will tell thee all about it, dear mother. Go Osman, and tell those chattering donkeys outside to go away. Do you not see they are gathering round and listening as well as talking? Send them to their business, and give them enough to do to keep them out of my way. Then return, and I will give some further directions."

The grotesque-looking but faithful "Aga" (as these guardians of the hareem are generally called in Egypt) bowed and withdrew, driving the troop of grinning black women before him, and drawing the curtains after him.

"Now, my son," said Sitt Fatmeh, sitting up and composing herself, "tell me what is coming upon us, and what evil eye has lighted on our house? (God and the prophet keep us from harm)."

Ain el Hayat had meantime risen from her lowly posture, and going to the various entrances of the room ascertained that all the slaves were gone to another part of the house by the arrangement of Osman, who

already knew his master's reason for wishing no one to overhear what he had to tell. She quickly returned and took her place beside her husband, who held a hand of each of his beloved ones, as he began his recital.

"Those fools are all out of earshot now? that is well, for not a bird of the air must hear us speak," said he, as his wife looked at him in breathless anxiety. "Listen, both of you," he continued, "some enemy has been at work for several days. I suspected this, but would not speak till matters were more sure. I feared I had an enemy with his Highness, who, since my father's death last year, has continued to me the favour he had for him. Well, you heard of those disturbances in the Upper Province among the peasants who rebelled on account of some taxes?"

"Yes, we heard," said Ain El Hayat; "I never breathed a word on the subject to any person living," he went on; "for though I pitied the peasants in my heart, as we all know how the officials are wont to oppress them, and take more than the due money in order to fill their own pockets, still I am not such a fool as to encourage anything of rebellion. I had no more to do with the affair than you had, of course; the disturbance was no great affair; it was quickly put down by government, and a few of the leaders banished to the White Nile."

"But, my son," interrupted his mother, "who could think that you were engaged in such matters? Light of my eyes, faithful son of a faithful father, what can they say against you?"

"Alas! my mother, who can stand before envy? no devil is worse. There is a man who has long envied me the favour of our ruler; my estate in the upper province is, as it happens, only a few miles from that village in which the peasants who rebelled first met. It was said by this man (or rather by persons he doubtless paid well for their falsehoods) that some of my peasants had joined the rebels; and though it was found that no proof existed of this, it was further alleged that I had incited them to the affair. It rests solely on the accusation of a jealous enemy; but it takes time to prove the *contrary*, as every one knows. I wrote two days ago, when I first heard, through a faithful friend, of the plot that was getting up against me, to the Sheikh of my own village to make him write down my peasants' names; two only were absent, he writes, on business of their own in Boulac, to sell some corn. But the Sheikh of the *other* village swears that this is a subterfuge, and that these men were among the insurgents—of course he is bribed by—" he paused, and looked round cautiously.

His mother sprang to her feet at that instant, and looking taller than usual from the long white robe she wore trailing on the ground, while her dilated eyes and knitted brow made her seem like an incensed pythoness of old, "Tell me his name," she exclaimed, in a sort of loud whisper, hissing out the words with terrible emphasis; "who is he? that I may curse him with ten thousand curses."

"Hush, mother, hush, be not so violent, some one might hear. I dare not name him save in a whisper, and you must not repeat the name, or things will fare worse with me."

Bending his head so that his mother was forced to stoop in order to hear, he whispered the name "Ahmed Mohammed Fehmy," all common names enough, but the union of the three showed the person intended, the last being the name of the father, and only used to distinguish him from the many other Ahmeds and Mohammeds. The ladies know him by report, of course, only, for it is hardly needful to observe that they could never have *seen* any of the acquaintances of the gentlemen of the family; but they know his history and character nearly as well as if they had seen him, possibly better, for actions tell often more of the truth than looks and words. He was a Bey like Zohrab, but several years older. He had long been jealous that the superior attainments and remarkable intelligence of the younger man had made him rise quickly even in a country where, alas! education and good sense had too frequently "knocked under," as the phrase is, to flattery and cunning. Besides this, another cause of ill-feeling had arisen on the marriage of Zohrab, nearly two years ago: Ahmed had, through a powerful friend, requested the favour of the hand of one of the Princess's band of favourite maidens whom she called her daughters, and expected to be at least as fortunate as the younger man, instead of

which he met with a polite refusal. The fact had been that the princess, who managed to know everything, had learned that he had a disagreeable, vulgar mother who annoyed the two wives he already had, and also she preferred giving her *pets* to those who were not previously married.

All these details had reached the hareem long before; for one might almost put as a motto on the mysterious curtain, "All gossip may freely enter here," mankind may be excluded, but gossip is as clever at finding entrance as the midge.

When, therefore, the ladies heard the name of this man, their faces grew dark at once, and, for a minute, both remained silent; then the wife timidly asked, "What have they decreed for my lord? is it banishment?"

"The traitor! the liar!" said the Bey, in a low but indignant voice, his eyes flashing as he spoke, "wants to have me banished to the White Nile. But it is uncertain, and I hope he will fail."

The White Nile! Is there any one who has long lived in Egypt who has not learned to turn pale at that dreaded name? Is there a native who does not secretly, if not openly, shudder at the words? for it means that the culprit (often a suspected man, but not a guilty one—sometimes one who is known to be really innocent of any offence but some trifling error, but has the misfortune to be obnoxious to one of those in power) is sent nominally to the far in-

terior, whence the White Nile has its hidden springs, but, in *reality*, to be taken beyond the reach of rescue or sympathy, and secretly put to death. It is a well-known saying, "from the White Nile no one comes back." The mystery and concealment seem to make this sentence more terrible than ordinary sentences of death, as one might expect. What wonder that the fear of it drove the unhappy mother of Zohrab almost to desperation!

The oriental temperament may be compared to the Mediterranean sea. When calm, it is *very* calm, peaceful as a child's slumber, smooth as glass; but when excited by rain and wind, in one moment it is turned to frantic rage, and the waves lash the shore as if in madness. Sitt Fatmeh drew herself to her full height, and she was rather above the average (for Turkish women are usually rather short), and tore the kerchief from her head without speaking. She flung it under her feet and trampled on it, and then, uttering a succession of sharp short cries, she burst forth in a perfect torrent of curses and abuse in the tongue of her childhood, mingled with invocations in Arabic (which was the *religious* language to her). Thick and fast proceed the words of unrestrained frenzy and grief, and she tore out whole handfuls of her hair, and danced, or, one might more properly say, jumped up and down, slapping her own cheeks and breast with such vehemence that the sound echoed through the wide apartment, Ain el Hayat, more gentle in nature,

though equally distressed, sat on the floor, rocking herself to and fro, and sobbing bitterly with her face hidden in her hands, but not uttering a word, except the occasional cry, "Oh, God, my husband!"

After a minute or two, however, all the man was roused in Zohrab, and he quickly began to exert his authority to tranquillise the noisy grief, which was so unwise under the circumstances.

"Mother, for God's sake, be quiet; wouldst thou destroy me? Stop at once, I say. Ain el Hayat, be still, child; don't cry so, but listen to me, I have much to say, and the time is short, and you become thus like two mad persons. Be quiet, in God's name!"

He spoke rather sternly, but less would not have restrained them, and making a strong effort, both tried to check themselves, and sat down on each side of him, each holding and kissing one of his hands.

"There now, my mother; there, my little wife; enough; listen calmly now. Recollect nothing is yet decided. My brother-in-law, as you know, is an excellent man, and he, and some friends, for I have some good friends, are working for me."

"God bless them!" murmured the poor wife.

"They tell me," continued Zohrab, "that by the help of God, it may be better than my fears, as they are trying to get a private order of banishment for a year from his Highness, in the shape of a mere *permission* to travel for such a time, do you see? It is really a banishment, but I shall be saved the disgrace

of a public sentence entirely, and my life will be safe, if I can get away unknown to my enemy and his spies; for Ahmed is quite capable of assassination if he thinks his plot likely to fail. My sister, whom I saw last night, thinks her husband will succeed, because the chief Eunuch is his friend, and he has, as we all know, a good deal of influence."

"But, oh! my Zohrab, you must not delay in any case," said Ain el Hayat, in a questioning voice.

"No, we have arranged that, between the fear of Ahmed's plot succeeding and the danger of his having me secretly murdered on my way, if he fails in his rage. My brother-in-law advises my going to his house to-night, in the disguise of a female slave; he is preparing, through his confidential steward, what is necessary, especially the black paint. If we have the paper we hope for ready and *signed* to-night or to-morrow, I may then leave by the train quietly, but the disguise may be no longer needful, as it could not be known that I was in that house, and I could go by a night or early morning train; we can settle details afterwards. If, on the contrary, our fears—I mean worst, you know—are realised, I must keep the negress dress and go with some trusty aga to Alexandria as a slave on her way to some lady's hareem. Do not fear, mother; by the prophet's help, all will be carried through. My sister is, at all events, to be here this morning at noon as if to pay you a visit."

"Now, Ain el Hayat, don't begin crying again, my

dearest; do as I tell thee, my life;" and he held a handkerchief to the streaming eyes.

"I will, I will be calm, my love and my lord," said the poor young creature, struggling for composure.

"Well, you and my mother must receive Nezleh just as usual, do you see? Spies may be about; who can say? She has told her own household that you are about to send a newly-purchased slave with her on trial for a day or two in the hareem, as is so often done in families of relations; and then I can return with the train after dark in the disguise. But be calm, my dear wife," he added, tenderly kissing the pale cheek that rested on his shoulder.

"Oh, my lord, my life, how can I ever live without you? why not let me go with you? I could also dress as a slave. I would go anywhere and do anything to be with my love!"

"Go to *Europe!* A Mohammedan lady go where there are no true believers; go among infidels!" exclaimed her mother-in-law. "Now, Ain el Hayat, I did not think I had a fool for a daughter-in-law!"

Her son held his wife's hand and looked at her, evidently sorely tempted to yield to her request.

"I could get her European dress at Alexandria," said he, "I know a European lady here, indeed, who would help us in any way, even go with her to the ship if necessary."

"Oh, so do I," said Ain el Hyat. "My lord means the Sitt Irene, who was here the other day."

But the imploring looks of the two young people met with no sympathy from the older lady; old habits and time-honoured customs had hardened around her like plaster of Paris; you might break the mould to pieces, but as to altering its shape, the time for that was gone! She seemed almost to forget her grief and terror for the moment in her displeasure at this new idea.

"What notions are these, my son? What folly is entering your head, to think of your wife being seen by infidels, and go about without a veil? Such a thought is too frightful to entertain it a single moment; better she should die a hundred deaths."

To offend a mother is no light thing to a man of any respectability and good feeling in the East, and, besides, her son felt that her displeasure would injure his youthful wife hopelessly in the eyes of all their friends and family. So he gave up the wild idea (though it *had* been very sweet for a moment) of thinking that the woman who belonged to him as his companion and helpmeet might have been with him in his journey to foreign lands.

"Now before we speak again we must eat," said he, trying to smile, "for we are all exhausted, and I see it is late (looking at his watch). Call the women, mother, to bring breakfast."

She clapped her hands directly.

"You must both take some food or you will be ill," he continued, "and try to be as usual; our slaves are

I hope faithful, but they gossip on the roofs with other slaves, and who knows what may be said?"

As he ceased speaking a black woman entered with a small round table, a few inches high only, which she put in the middle of the room, and a second followed her with a large metal tray of savoury little dishes, which she put upon it, and the three took their places on the carpet she had previously laid for them, and endeavoured to eat, though sorrow made it difficult, but each tried to swallow a few morsels, to induce the others to do so. The melancholy meal did not last long, and the Bey having had water poured on his hands from the silver Ibreek (a vessel with a long spout made for that purpose), while a white slave held the basin and embroidered towel, desired his wife to come and assist him in his private room, where he had papers and other matters to arrange, while his mother went to give orders for a dinner to be prepared against the arrival of her daughter. A hareem visit generally means great part of the day, and if a relative, includes children and two or three slaves; so the negresses had enough to do, and were kept out of the way for some hours.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISGUISE.

MOTHERS and daughters, or other relatives, do not quite so frequently visit one another as with us, when there is the cumbrous arrangement of hareem life to be disturbed for the expedition, the face veiling, and the robing and dressing, and more than all the *moving*, to those used to spend so large a portion of their time in sitting still. Nevertheless, visits are not so rare as to excite actual suspicion, and though only two months ago, Sitt Nezleh and all her tribe had been to see her mother right at the other end of the city, still she did not think it needful to do more than express her determination early in the morning, and get her party under weigh. The old days of the picturesque hareem donkeys, as they were called, with their rich carpets spread over the high stuffed saddles, and the fair riders muffled in their disguising mantles and veils, with feet put into short stirrups, mounted astride on the top, and carefully guided through the thoroughfares in single file — generally, a set of negresses in white robes and veils winding up the

cortège—had already nearly passed away at the date of our tale; some might yet be seen, but not among the ladies of the highest class hareems, and carriages become every year more in vogue, even where the streets are far too narrow to make them safe or convenient. Soon after noon, the family of Mohammed Fuad drove up to the door of Zohrab's house in two carriages. Neyleh was a few years older than her brother, and looked more, having been married twelve or thirteen years at least, and would soon be thinking about a bridegroom for her eldest girl; she was a pretty woman still, however, and very pleasant and amiable, and greatly attached to this her only brother. Her husband, in spite of great difference of age, for he was a man of forty, and Zohrab only twenty-six, preferred him to any other companion and looked on him quite as a brother. He was at this very time doing his utmost to counteract the mischief the enemy had been brewing against him.

The lady was duly received with the customary embraces and salutations; no signs of grief were allowed to appear before the crowd of slaves, only sundry looks and nods between mother and daughter when the face-veils were removed. They wore the delicate fine muslin *yashmaks* of the Turkish ladies, being of Turkish, or rather, Circassian race, and the rich flowing pelisse of coloured merino which prevails in Constantinople, instead of the black silk robe of native Egyptian ladies. Under these outer garments

appeared the white cambric or fine linen usually worn as a summer dress in hareems, when it is not a sufficiently ceremonial visit to make the festive brocades and satins absolutely necessary. Sitt Nezleh had wisely left her older children at home on this occasion with the head of her household, a white slave capable of acting housekeeper. In general, on all family visits in the East, the mother drags her whole brood with her, with the negress attendants of the younger ones, so that the rooms in hot weather are needlessly oppressive from the numbers. (I have counted fifty black slaves and at least as many babies, besides a swarm of children of different ages at a party which, lasting till late at night, was only fit for grown persons.)

The lady had made some excuse for departing from ordinary usage on this day, and I am afraid made up one or two little stories about it to pacify her small daughters and seven year old son, for in the monotonous life of a hareem, any sort of "outing" is greatly prized by children of course. But she took the youngest boy, as not only would he have screamed the whole day if left behind, but the circumstance would attract notice, for he was the special pet of the household, and, moreover, was too young to overhear and repeat things. He was not an agreeable visitor certainly, being dreadfully troublesome in poking into every room and discovering that his uncle's things were in disorder, and that his pretty aunt would not

play with him, asking precocious questions of every one, and worrying his grandmother almost past endurance, till happily the arrival of dinner stopped his mouth. The slaves then took care to stuff the youthful Ismael till, between pastry and the heat of the day, he was *hors de combat*, and fell asleep, to the general relief, on a divan, while the anxious circle began to discuss their affairs in peace.

"Brother," said Nezleh, "now that the little demon there is quiet, we must begin to disguise you at once; yes, truly, though it is yet early, the paint must have time to dry; besides, if Ismael wakes he will not leave me a moment's peace. It is now "Asser" (about half-past three or four o'clock). Come, sister, do not begin to cry, we shall cry when he is gone."

"What! do *I* feel nothing? Is not Zohrab my flesh and blood? Did I not love him from the hour of his birth, when I was but four years old, and my mother said, 'Behold thy brother, Nezleh; see what God has sent thee!' What is like a brother, child of the same mother?" (wiping a few tears as she spoke, as if to show that preaching was easier than practice).

Ain El Hayat felt that, although the tie of brother and sister, when both have the same mother, is usually stronger than that of marriage, which is so lightly dissolved, and so often shared with others, with Moslems, yet that, in her case, it was not the ordinary thing; and that to her, poor waif who had never

known any tie of blood save the faint, dim recollection of an old woman she believed to have been her grandmother, Zohrab was most emphatically everything in the world. Had she ever heard the touching words of Andromache, she might well have applied them to herself. She was too gentle to be hurt, however, and only pressed the hand of her sister-in-law in silence, and looked at her husband, whose answering glance spoke eloquently enough, and made her eyes overflow again, while Nezleh continued, unpacking a mysterious-looking parcel as she spoke, "If *my* heart is not bitter, whose can be? May God and his holy prophet punish the enemies of my beloved Zohrab, brother of my soul!" and she struck her own face with a resounding slap that turned it quite red.

"Compose yourself, dear sister," said Zohrab patting her shoulder affectionately; "we shall perhaps be overheard, and you may wake the boy. Show me this; it is the paint in a bottle, I think."

"Yes," she answered, "you must call Osman; he will do the work better than we. It is not the first time he has disguised people. He lived, you know, formerly in that hareem of—ha, ha, ha! No, brother, I will name no names, nor tell bad stories either, do not fear. I know you are so careful for your little rose there to hear no gossiping tales. So, Osman, here you are. Take this brush, and go into the inner room; I will keep near the door. Only face and hands; make him as like yourself as you can."

The man grinned at the last words, but then relapsed quickly into a sorrowful expression as he glanced at his master's sad expression, and they both withdrew. He took care to blacken only the outside of the hands thickly, and to leave the inside and the nails only of a faint dusky hue. The face was made quite black, and as soon as it was dry the ladies were summoned to put on the dress. The painting and drying had occupied a good deal of time, so that it was not too soon to put on the rest of the disguise, as directly the sun set they were to start. A white cotton mantle and face-veil were adjusted over the coloured calico trousers and skirt, and the dress was then complete. The height, for he was a well-sized man, was not such an inconvenience as might have been supposed, because the negresses from certain tribes are exceedingly tall, and look much like men in petticoats. The short fat ones are certainly more numerous, but the black Amazons are not so rare as to excite any surprise or notice. Nezleh then began to talk loudly about going home, and her mother, though dying to have them away, and fearing every instant to hear the step of an officer of justice, was forced to make the usual feint of wishing to delay the party, as the omission of it would have been a piece of rudeness which must excite the attention of the slaves. At last they were got under weigh, the older lady, with considerable self-possession, calling out at the head of the stairs, "Take the new slave who has just come,

with you, daughter, and keep her a day or two, to see if she is likely to suit me, before I pay down the money." The house slaves were under the impression that this woman must have arrived with the visitor, as she had brought several with her, and they had not all been there; most, indeed, had been in the kitchen, except the Circassians, who were all trusted with the affair. The slaves of Nezleh, on the other hand, took it for granted that this new-comer had been in the house before they came, and returned with them to be proved, as is a common practice among ladies in Egypt. So the plan was quite successful; the boab or doorkeeper, indeed, did remark to Osman, as he locked the outer door, that he had not heard anything of his mistress buying a new slave.

"Sitt Fatmeh may buy her or she may not," replied Osman oracularly;" but it is my idea that she is only looking at her for a friend in Alexandria who needs one. It is, however, my lady's affair. I fancy the woman is stupid, and will not suit our hareem at any rate.

The party drove off in the carriages which were prepared for them, and no news reached the anxious wife and mother that night. They could scarcely close their eyes, and before dawn were again on foot, weary, yet sleepless. The faint light of dawn had just appeared when one of the slaves, peeping cautiously into the room where they were sadly seated together,

whispered that the aga of Sitt Nezleh had come. He was instantly called in, of course, and informed them, to their intense relief that his master had succeeded in obtaining the paper, with the desired permission to travel, which, with a hint to let the young Bey be off as soon as possible, had been given him at mid night.

"It was a hard matter," said the servant. "My master says that Ahmed Bey had sent to his Honour's estate and caught the two peasants who had been missing at the enrolling, and had the poor fellows tortured."

Ain el Hayat groaned and turned deadly pale ; but the mother said, "Hush, child, we must hear all; go on, Ibraheem Aga."

"Well," continued the man, "my ladies, the poor men were honest and bore as long as they could, and denied the lies of those villains, but one fainted away, and became too ill to speak, and the other got delirious and raved, and said anything and everything. They tried to make out that he had confessed, being bribed high, of course ; but the moment he got out of their cruel hands, what do you think he did? The prophet inspired him truly ; he sent off his son, a fine young man, by the new railway that is just open, you know. He had come the first part of the way by a government steamer whose captain knows his honour, Zohrab Bey, well; so by this means he reached Cairo before the messenger of that friend who wishes to

destroy my lord, could arrive; he was just two hours in advance of him, by God's grace."

"Thank God," cried both the ladies, with tears of joy at this recital.

"It is, therefore, settled," the servant continued, "as we wish, but the chief minister being friendly to Ahmed Bey, his Highness wished to avoid scandal, and have the affair got over quietly; and, indeed, my master says Zohrab Bey is better out of the way till this minister is no longer in power, or till Ahmed is out of favour; it will not be long, he says, please God, and then all will be right again. Now you are both to go to my ladies' hareem as soon as you can to take leave of his honour who is to start by the train at eight o'clock by the frank time. You have no time to lose, therefore, ladies."

"Quick, quick, girls! bring my veil and all the rest of my things; fly, and lose not a moment," cried the mother; "and the aga must drink a cup of coffee while we dress. Now, you girls, what are you about?" and with most unwonted activity the good lady got ready. Her daughter-in-law, at the first word, had flown to her room and snatched up her dress; she was ready before the aga had swallowed his tiny cup of scalding coffee, and in a few minutes they were with one of the white slaves, seated in the carriage he had brought and driving through the city.

It was still early when they reached the house of Sitt Fatmeh's daughter and son-in-law, when

they were most affectionately received and at once conducted to a room where the Bey awaited them, no longer in his disguise, as it was thought that he might now venture to travel in his own person, especially as he was going off so quickly, and that no one except his own special friends, not even his slaves, except those who could be thoroughly relied on—as his faithful Osman, his nurse, and the white slaves brought up in the family, who had known and loved him from infancy—had the least idea that he was going to leave the city. The time passed only too quickly, and it was necessary to say the last farewell: but while Ain el Hayat was yet clinging to her husband's neck, he whispered, "Thou canst read, my love, I shall write to thee, and see here"—putting out a little note-book—"tell me the name of this dear lady who loves thee so much, I mean her second name; yes, Hillyard, I recollect now;" writing it down as he spoke. "Now if I want to send a few words for thine eyes only, my love, I can send it through her. I do not distrust my good secretary, observe; but if he were ill or absent, or if some spy were to interfere, the English lady is a safe person; and I can write under cover to her."

"Oh, my Zohrab, thou art as wise as good! it is some comfort to think of reading words this dear hand writes; thank God for letting me learn to read."

Bidding his weeping relatives take care of his lovely

wife for his sake, the Bey put her into their arms half fainting, and striving to conceal the anguish that wrung his own heart; hurried down-stairs, and in a few minutes was on his way, in company with his secretary, who was to see him on board the ship, and a faithful Nubian lad, who was to be his attendant in France, whither for the present he was bound.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREEK SLAVE.

THE life of hareem ladies can hardly be favourable to good health even under the happiest circumstances. They rarely take exercise, properly so called; in these days indeed, many are permitted to drive out, but only in shut-up carriages, but even that poor kind of exercise is not partaken of by a large number who are accustomed to the old-fashioned style of living; some pass years without crossing their own threshold. A lady (a native Christian, but one whose family kept up the old habits of seclusion which the Moslems seem to have introduced when they came into possession centuries ago) actually lived within a mile and a half of the great river Nile, and had attained middle age without having ever seen it, nor, as she expressed no particular wish to do so, is it likely that she ever beheld those waters on which her country depends for its fertility, but probably died without quitting her voluntary prison, for in her case it was not compulsory. Most of the wealthier establishments have some sort of garden certainly, and not a few have very good gardens even in the heart of the town, but

the languid habits of their life are such that the ladies rarely walk; they prefer to sit in a verandah and "smell the air," as they say, and the gardener brings roses, jasmin, and other flowers tied in somewhat stiff bouquets and hands to the slaves to present to them. The delight of strolling about to gather flowers for oneself, or picking oranges from the bough, though hanging in rich profusion within reach, hardly seems to occur to them, and some have been much diverted and amazed at hearing that English ladies not only gather flowers for themselves, but even like to cultivate them and to pull up weeds, rake beds, and cut off dead blossoms, with their own hands. Labour of any sort is looked on by these caged birds of women, as a thing for those compelled to it by poverty or dire necessity of some kind, never as a voluntary thing, still less as one which sweetens the life of man, when not in excess, more than all the luxuries of idleness and wealth.

Slavery has no doubt much to do with this contempt for work, but the languor of an inactive and *purposeless* existence perhaps does more. They wander listlessly from room to room, or sit for hours smoking till the head must become more or less stupefied by the fumes of tobacco, though it is certainly a lighter kind than that in use in Europe, and never seem to think of roaming about in the garden, even in the most delightful weather. When the soft breeze of early morning is waving the fragrant orange blossoms

and the little birds gaily hopping about the hanging wreaths of the Sitt el Hosn, (or lady of beauty), a favourite Egyptian creeper, with its delicate lilac flowers, the sun shining cheerfully through the willow boughs, where the turtle dove is cooing to his mate—and everything seems to say, "Come out, come out, and enjoy the beauty of the Great Creator's works! What silk and damask, what gold and jewels are so fair as the garden in early morning in this sunny land? What perfumes made by man are so sweet as the flowers bathed in dew?

"But," say they, "we live as we are accustomed;" and they do not know the cause of the weariness often to be seen on their faces, or of the frequent headaches and other ailments to which they are subject.

"What do you do all day long?" an English lady once asked a friend in a hareem—a person of more than average intelligence, be it said—who often complained of headache, and was stouter than was natural at her age, for she was then at most only two or three-and-thirty.

"Why," she answered, "I go and sit on that divan yonder, and then come here and sit upon this one a while," shrugging her shoulders as she spoke.

The only diversion, except occasional visits from relatives or friends leading as narrow a life as themselves, are the gossip and jokes of a low kind of female jester, one being usually a regular attendant

in most hareems, and as she is of course a scandal-monger, as well as often full of vulgar and detestable jests, her influence over the young must be pernicious in the extreme.

Happy it was for the fair Ain el Hayat that her studies had not only occupied her mind but her time so much, and that her natural refinement had thus been aided. She was, therefore, as much above the average of young matrons in simplicity as intelligence. But no study could supply the need to the body of air and exercise. Like all reared in such an unnatural way, she was not very strong, and easily sank under grief or vexation into a feeble state of health. For several days after the Bey's departure she could neither eat nor sleep, except in a degree quite insufficient to keep up an ordinary degree of strength, and every day found her paler and weaker, more dull and listless, than the previous one. Her mother-in-law was differently constituted; she had cried, sobbed, scolded and wailed by turns for many hours after her son's departure, and then gradually returned to her usual state of placidity, only looking duller than her wont, certainly, and talking less, but still eating and sleeping as before.

"If Ain el Hayat does not soon get better we really must send for the female doctor," she said to her chief maid, the sober and experienced Ayesha, a Circassian, who had been with her more than thirty years, and who would have been gray, only that she applied

henna leaves (powdered and moistened) to her locks at proper intervals, so that they were tinged of a pale carrot colour. "I felt her hand this morning," continued Sitt Fatmeh, "and it was so hot, I fancy she has a little fever. What is your thought, Ayesha?"

"We might give the young lady some cooling drink, certainly," replied the woman, "and the wise woman might come and burn incense and make a charm."

"My son will not allow a wise woman to enter the house," said his mother, who, though not above superstitions of the kind herself, was thoroughly loyal to her son, and never did in his absence what she knew he greatly disapproved of. "If he were here, he would probably bring the doctor who cured him of that illness he had last winter; but of course I could not do such a thing, especially as he is away. I would send for a *barber* to let a little blood indeed; but she does not feel any headache, and blood-letting might not be good. We will send for Sitt Haanem, the doctor woman, and hear her opinion, I think, Ayesha."

The slave quite approved, though she rather preferred the sorceress herself. Still, if she were not to come, this person was next best. The lady doctor was, as may be supposed, tolerably ignorant, but most of her remedies were not likely to do much harm fortunately. So she was brought, and talked a great deal, and told many anecdotes of sick people,

their odd symptoms and her prescriptions, which had the effect of entertaining the hareem.

Unluckily, the patient was not the better, and after two days begged she might be sent away, saying, "She only tires me, and it makes me feel worse to have her sitting staring and watching me all the time." For the good woman, whenever she got a patient in so high a position, left the poorer ones to shift for themselves, and took up her abode at the hareem, on the pretext of watching the precious invalid. Of course she had the privilege of sleeping on a nice sofa whenever she liked, or on the mat with a pillow under her head, which in hot weather she liked even better; of having a feast of fat things, such as her taste rejoiced in greatly, at every meal, and pipes or cigars at discretion. Poor Sitt Haanem was therefore sorely disappointed, in spite of the handsome fee given her, when she was told, on the third day, that the great lady had resolved to try change of air for the sick one, and that they were going to spend a few weeks at the nearest estate of the Bey. The plan had only occurred to Sitt Fatmeh when thinking what to do for her daughter-in-law when she perceived that the doctoress only worried her. She had never been at the farm herself except once, fifteen years before, when the Bey was a boy, though the distance was only four hours, and great part of the journey could be made in a carriage; but so contented was she with her tortoise-like existence, that but for this illness

she might have let fifteen more years pass without a visit to the country.

When the plan was settled in her mind the good lady became much pleased with it, for another reason which occurred to her: a certain festival of importance was not far off, and it was sure to bring visitors to the hareem, relatives and acquaintances who hardly ever came, *except* at such times, would be calling and gossiping, and asking questions about the Bey's absence. It would be convenient to shut up the house, and leave only a couple of trusty servants beside the boab, who could reply to all inquiries, "Gone to the country for the young lady's health."

So she lost no time in sending a messenger to have the country house prepared, as though sufficiently spacious, it was, like most of these half-farm half-villa residences, merely built of mud-brick, and such become reservoirs of dust and habitations of vermin when long neglected.

A troop of donkeys, laden with the rich carpets and cushions which form the chief part of Oriental furniture, together with cooking utensils and various necessaries, were instantly despatched, and as on occasion the slaves, usually rather lazy and remiss, *can* work hard for a short time, everything was arranged with surprising quickness, and the following day rather early in the afternoon, the ladies set out, so as to arrive about sunset. The last hour's journey had

to be made on donkeys, which had been provided to meet the carriages, for the road went no farther, the raised pathway above the fields being unsafe for anything but riding, and even that had to be managed with caution, the watercourses being frequent, and only roughly bridged over with reeds and dried mud.

The invalid, however, bore the unwonted fatigues better than was expected, and seemed not at all worse than when they started, except for the natural weariness, which made her glad to lie down.

The apartment arranged for her had been made as comfortable as circumstances allowed, and as tasteful as a room carpeted with the exquisite productions of the Persian and Damascus looms must always look. An Englishwoman would have adorned it with flowers, but as yet the Easterns, though delighting in them, especially if fragrant, do not care to have flowers in their rooms or as an ornament, they hold a bunch in the hand, or put some blossoms in their heads, and throw away when withered, but plants in pots, or blossoms in vases, are not to be seen unless among the few who have adopted some European tastes.

The divan was spread with a richly embroidered cover, and the cushions with snowy calico of the finest texture, which made the room look fresh and clean, and a heavy curtain, a little faded, but still gorgeous, concealed the rough plastered wall opposite the latticed windows; an elderly woman,

of fair complexion and rather tall, was dusting the place with a feather broom, though it looked spotlessly neat already.

On seeing the young lady and her attendants entering, she saluted her respectfully, and with a grave quiet manner, quite unlike the usual profuse compliments and smiling salutations of the peasants on the arrival of their superiors; yet though her complexion as well as her manners betokened a "white slave," her dress was the common dark blue linen robe of the country women, only distinguished by being cleaner than their garb usually is, on account of their rough and dirty work. After presenting the ladies with lemon sherbet, which she had evidently prepared to meet them on their arrival, this person again saluted them silently and withdrew.

"Morgiana!" said Ain el Hayat, addressing one of the older slaves, who generally acted as cook, "this sherbet is delicious, it is much better than what we drink in Cairo!"

"The lemons are fresh, lady," replied the negress.

"Ah, but it is better made also, and peasants are usually stupid. What nice manners that woman has too! Can you tell me who she is? Go and inquire."

Morgiana presently came back and informed her young mistress that the woman was called Zobeide, and was the widow of a former bailiff or steward to the farm, and that she lived with the present, who was her brother-in-law, and was very useful to his wife,

who had a large family, as she was very clever about little children, and a famous nurse to the sick. "When any one here has a fever or meets with an accident," continued Morgiana, "they try to coax or even bribe the sister-in-law to let Zobeide come and take care of him, as she is really as good as any doctor they say."

"If she is clever about the sick she may be able to think of something for my daughter-in-law," observed the older lady, "if she had some drink, for instance, to give an appetite."

"Dear mother, you are very kind," said Ain el Hayat, languidly, "but it is sorrow of heart that is my malady; only God can help me."

"True, daughter, God is everything I know, but see—am I not sorry also? Who is like a mother? What is thy grief to mine? Yet I eat, and do not cry all day. What is the good to Zohrab if he returns and finds us both dead? On the contrary, let him please God and the prophet" (the good woman very often put in the latter expression as if she thought the Almighty might possibly need a little help, in spite of her acknowledging that He was all powerful, so inconsistent is man's untaught heart), "let him please God and the prophet, come safe back, and find you fat and well and handsomer than ever, and will he not rejoice?"

Having delivered this little address Sitt Fatmeh began to tell over her beads, which were always in her

hand or beside her. Like many elderly Moslem ladies the "tasbeh," or string of ninety-nine beads, was used somewhat like a Romanist's rosary. The words were rather devout epithets addressed to the Almighty than prayers properly so called, and were frequently muttered over during odd moments of the day as a sort of pious exercise. She had just got through a dozen or so of these muttered ejaculations when coffee was brought in, and she desired the black girl to call the before-mentioned white slave directly.

Zobeide presently stood before her, waiting near the door with folded arms and in perfect silence, this being the Eastern way of expressing, "What did you please to want?" She does not speak till she is either addressed or, what is commoner, receives a sign with the hand to come near and receive the order. "As the eyes of the maiden unto the hand of her mistress so do our eyes wait upon the Lord" (P. 9).

Zobeide was a person of at least fifty-eight or sixty years old, probably even older, but a vigorous constitution was shown in the upright figure, and firm, active, though quiet movements. Her features must have been handsome in youth, and the skin was still fair, and had evidently never been exposed to sun and wind in rough out-door labour; but the countenance was almost devoid of expression, and had a singularly cold, hard indifference in the look of the eyes and mouth. Her gray hair was nearly concealed by a veil of clean fine white muslin wrapped round

the head and throat, instead of the kerchief of coarse black silk with a red and yellow border tied round the peasant women's heads. This was the only difference in her dress, the outer veil of thin purplish black over head and shoulders, and the loose sleeved dark blue dress was, as before remarked, a common peasant's attire, but she was as evidently no peasant as she was no Egyptian.

After looking at her for a few minutes while sipping her tiny cup of black coffee, Sitt Fatmeh beckoned to Zobeide to approach the sofa. "Come and see my daughter," said she. "I hear you are clever about the sick, and she has been ill ever since the Bey left us."

Zobeide approached, and though her face remained as impassive as before, her manner was both respectful and kind as she took the soft delicate hand in hers, hardened by domestic work, and looked searchingly into the lovely eyes. After a minute's thought, she said, "The Sitt Ain el Hayat needs sleep very much; she will have fever if she does not sleep."

"The Prophet! Of course she will; that is just what has been troubling us so—she neither eats nor sleeps, as one may say, since the Bey went away. If you could give her something to enable her to relish her food—"

"Sleep must come first," said Zobeide, not rudely, but with a gentle air of authority as an acknowledged sick nurse. "If the lady permits, I will prepare a drink which is made of herbs, perfectly harmless, but

soothing and excellent in its effects. She will, please God, sleep after it, and then you will see her eat to-morrow, at least better than before."

"As you will," said the patient sadly; "but, my good Zobeide, there is no cure for a sorrowful heart."

The touching expression in the innocent, large brown eyes as she said this might have melted a marble figure, as the saying is, but Zobeide looked as impassive as before, though she answered gently, "It will be best to try my drink, and your honour will get a little sleep to-night, at all events. If I have my lady's permission, I will go at once, before it is too dark, to gather the right herbs from the garden. The supper is now nearly ready; and in a couple of hours, or even less if you like, the medicine shall be brought." And receiving a sign from Sitt Fatmeh, she made the customary graceful salutation (touching the lips and forehead, and then the heart, very slightly and rapidly), and then departed.

At the appointed time Ain el Hayat lay on the divan, in her flowing robe of white cambric, and a white muslin kerchief on her head, the long hair plaited in two loose plaits; a small lamp alone gave a softened light to the otherwise dark room, and the old black nurse was seated on the floor, already nodding with sleep (for it was many a year since she had made such an expedition into the country), when Zobeide appeared at the door with the draught in a china bowl. The invalid drank it without the least hesitation, and

then said some words of courteous thanks in her pretty kindly way as she returned the vessel to the woman. Her mother-in-law was substantially kind, both from a really kind heart and from motives of religion, but her manner to her inferiors was apt to be haughty, whereas the younger lady was noted among all the slaves for her gentleness and goodness, and was much beloved in consequence. Her words this evening, or the way in which they were spoken, touched Zobeide, or else, being alone with Ain el Hayat, she felt more free. There was a slight contraction of the eyebrows and a smile, though a very faint one, on the lips as she said, "Sleep, sweet lady! Sorrow is not to be cured by medicine, indeed, but sleep makes it less hard. Sleep, then, and forget thy sorrows." She then touched the dozing negress on the shoulder, and whispered to her to be careful not to allow her mistress to be disturbed on any account after her potion, on which point the prudent daughter of Soudan acted at once by summoning another slave, who was made to sleep at the threshold of the door, while she herself lay on the floor close to her young lady, who shortly fell into a profound slumber.

CHAPTER VI.

RAYS OF LIGHT.

THE Abbadeeh of the Bey was not far from the little property of Irene Hillyard, and of course she soon learned, through the peasants, the arrival of the hareem, and, to her astonishment, that the Bey was not with them. One of her informants said he was gone to the Frank country because he was out of favour with the Government (this one came nearest the truth); another, that it was to see some French doctor; a third, that it was to change the air, or, as he expressed it Egyptian fashion, "to smell the air" out yonder—"as if there could be any air so good as that of Egypt!" he concluded, tossing his head and sniffing the warm, pure air of the field whose stubble he was engaged in ploughing up with a very primitive plough, and pair of buffaloes. "At any rate, Sitt Irene," observed his wife, who was standing near, having been down to the Sakkea, or water-wheel, to help with the irrigation of the onion field—"at any rate, the young lady is sick; the boab told me so when I met him this morning at the market in the village, were he went to buy a store of tobacco and I know not what beside."

"Never mind his purchases, Zanuba, tell me about Sitt Ain el Hayat; is she so very ill, really?" said Mrs. Hillyard, anxiously.

"Nay, nothing serious; I hope, in the Prophet's name, that the eye has not fallen upon her!"

"I believe you fear the eye, which is all nonsense, more than God," cried the lady, rather impatiently; "but, go on, tell me about the young lady."

"Well, it seems she fretted herself sick when the Bey left, and they got a doctor woman in Cairo, who made her worse rather than better, so the great lady Mashalla—she is clever!—said a change to the peasants' country was better for health than medicine, and truly it is good air here."

"That is so, Zanuba. Now let your boy Hassan go and call Mr. Girgas, and say I want him to call at the Bey's place for me, to inquire for the sick lady. Tell him to see Osman the aga himself, not merely that chattering boab, and to say, if not inconvenient, I would call this afternoon, when the heat is less" (it was early in the morning that this conversation took place).

Girgas did his mistress's errand without delay. The dew was not yet dry on the spear-like blades of the sugar canes as he crossed the few fields that stood between the house of his mistress and that of the Bey, and the sun was not yet oppressive, as he reached the mud-wall which protected the yard from intruders, according to the custom of the country, and enclosed a tolerably large space, shaded by mulberry trees.

The boab opened the great nail-studded door, which generally stood open by day, but was closed when the " hareem " were occupying the house. A sakkea, with its deep, large well, in which the huge wheel turned round, was on one side of this enclosure, its slow movements and creaking sound conveying a sense of pleasure to an Oriental, or to any one long resident in Egypt, which a stranger can hardly enter into: the "creak" of the water-wheel means coolness and fresh water, fertility to the land, refreshing the parched garden, slaking of thirst to man and beast; and in its own way it is music to the Egyptian ear on the hot summer day. As the steward entered the yard, a busy scene was going on at the miniature canal, well paved and lined with smooth flags, that was filled by the wheel, with its rude pitchers, which emptied themselves and refilled again at every revolution. A number of the peasant women belonging to the farm were engaged in washing clothes in their extremely simple fashion, namely, rubbing them with some river mud, and rinsing in the cold water without any soap; it is to be hoped that they were a little cleaner than before at any rate. One little washerwoman, of about five years old, was imitating her mother, and trying to wash her own frock; as she was squatted on a flat stone in the middle of the channel, which widened out into a sort of broad pool, in one place; the tiny creature would have been a study for an artist, in her white chemise, her little brown arms and feet so round

and well shaped, and her tangled brown locks hanging over the busy face, with its jet black eyesand healthy nut-brown cheeks. Of course it was all dirty, dress, and the rest of it, but in a picture!—however, Girgas was not an artist, and was utterly indifferent to the picturesque, and only paused to ask where was the aga, and being told he was in the garden, to make his way through a charming group of calves, heifers, and young buffaloes that had just come into the yard to drink at the flowing channel, and opening a side door, in a very dilapidated condition, entered the garden where, under a shady alley of fragrant flowering orange and lemon trees, the sooty guardian of the fair prisoners of the hareem was smoking his morning chibouk, and spoiling the pure flower-scented breeze, with its odours. On hearing the errand which brought Girgas at so early an hour, he sent a gardener's lad to inform the white slave (through the medium of a black one) of Sitt Irene's kind inquiries, and to learn whether the young lady were yet awake.

"Since our lord's departure, Mr. Girgas," said he, "our young mistress has been far from well, and a woman here, who is considered clever in such matters, made a herb drink for her that has calmed her wonderfully. Last night was the first that she has slept quietly and for any length of time, so the nurse of the Bey tells me, since that sad day when the light of our house was darkened by the absence of its master."

Girgas, of course, asked a few discreet and cautious

questions about the departure of the Bey so suddenly, and to such a distance, but the aga was very reticent on his lord's affairs, and merely said, "There is an evil eye, and there are evil tongues in palaces as well as in peasants' huts, my brother, and it is sometimes as well to move out of their way, for a season; also, it is good to smell the air occasionally in a new place for one's health. My lord may go for this or for that reason; it is not my affair. He is a good man Mr. Girgas, and not like many Beys and pashas; in fact, I know none like him for conduct. May God send him back in peace to his house. No wonder that our young lady mourns the absence of so excellent a husband." No more information could be extracted from Osman, who proffered a pipe to his visitor, and resumed his own.

The girl soon returned and said her mistress was awake and better, and that she sent salutations to the English lady, hoping she would favour her by coming to spend the day. With this message the steward hastened back, and after relating all that had passed with great minuteness, ordered out his lady's donkey, and in little more than half-an-hour she arrived at the hareem, and was received most affectionately by her friend, who, after the usual inquiries and salutations, hastened to relate the history of her husband's departure and its cause, and their alarm, not omitting to mention that he had promised to send any special letter to the care

of Sitt Irene, a piece of confidence which delighted her not a little. She listened with the deepest sympathy and interest to the whole story, and asked if there were no news since the Bey's leaving them.

"Yes," replied Ain el Hayat; "he sent me a few words from Alexandria, just before sailing. The two servants and the secretary went with him to see him on board, but he only took one of them with him, that Nubian lad he is so fond of; the secretary and the other servant came back at once, and brought us the account of his setting out and this little letter for me," producing it as she spoke. "I could read it myself after a little trouble," added she, with a blush of pleasure and pride at the achievement.

Letters in the East are somewhat like those of former days in England in their formality and set terms, but are shorter in general, and contain as little as is possible of details, and as *much* of salutation and compliment. Still the loving heart can discern the true feeling under the ceremonious expressions, and the fair Circassian kissed the paper as she read it to her friend. There was an important message in it after all the greetings to her and his mother, though a very brief one: "Ask the English lady for her book, and read it; it will do you no harm."

"Is not this very good, Sitt Irene? He will let me read in your book; I am so glad."

"So am I," answered Mrs. Hillyard, smiling, "and thankful to God for putting so good a thought into

his heart as to let his dear wife read what will comfort her in his absence. You will find that God's own word is like nothing else; no book, I mean, is to be compared to it."

"Certainly, it should be so, for God is not as we are; but is not our Koran also God's book?" and her brow was knitted with a puzzled look as she spoke.

"Some extracts from God's book are in it," replied Mrs. Hillyard, "and some of the precepts are taken in part from the teaching of the holy prophets of God, Moses, and David, and others, but a great part of it was written by men only, and that many years after God's book was given to us. But you can read for yourself and judge; read what God has revealed by His Spirit to man, and you will see it is better than any other book, I think. Shall we look into this, which is called Genesis, to begin with?"

"Yes, this is the best time, for my mother-in-law is dyeing her hair, and will not be ready for an hour at least; she is not fond of any books except the Koran, as you know."

Irene was only too glad to take this hint, for the elder lady's presence was rather a hindrance, and as she hoped, it proved the right time for her young friend. The relish for her ordinary subjects of interest was almost gone, but the book had for that very reason a better chance of her husband's permission being given; she would listen unfettered by fear or uneasiness.

After reading a chapter in the Old Testament and one in the Gospel, her friend closed the volume, and was struck with the rested and calm expression in the fair Circassian's sweet face.

"Can you let me have one to keep?" she said after a pause.

"With pleasure; you shall keep this; I have another at home. This has a nice print, and I will mark the place we have read in the Gospel, that you may read it again if you like."

The book was then put carefully into the lady's private chest among her brocaded dresses and fine muslins, and then her visitor inquired about the white slave whose draught had been so efficacious; saying that she had heard of her skill in nursing the sick, and also that some of the peasants said she had been a lady in her own country.

"I will send for her, by-and-by," said Ain el Hayat; "she is rather odd, but a kind creature. I owe her the first good sleep I have had for many days; but the slaves say she will not speak to them, and is proud; they do not seem to like her on that account, but the peasants respect her for her skill about the sick, as you have heard."

The mid-day meal was now ready, as a negress announced to them, and the great lady duly appeared having completed her toilette. It was not, indeed, that she dressed much in the country; a plain muslin robe and veil of simple white net, with her least

valuable jewels, were all that she now wore; but the hair dyeing was a long affair, and when the usual day came round for it, nothing but the direst distress would induce her to omit it. The day was hot, as was a matter of course at that season, but the rooms were shady and kept cool by sprinkling the stone floors, and the meal which was now brought in consisted of such things as were most suited to tempt the appetite in hot weather: stuffed tomatoes and vine leaves, fresh cucumbers, broiled meat in small morsels served on chopped parsley, rice with savoury sauce, or eaten with sour milk, native cheese and pickled vegetables of various sorts, and a dessert of the perfumed melon of Egypt, which, when good of its kind, can hardly be surpassed.

The guests sat on the floor round the low table, on which the tray was placed, each with a large napkin on her knees. Mrs. Hillyard was not a novice, and acquitted herself very deftly without fork or knife, though at home she preferred English style. As each finished eating she rose and went towards the entrance hall, where a white slave was ready with an "Ibreek" to pour water on her hands, while one of the negresses held a basin and a ball of scented Turkish soap.

The elder lady then took her pipe, but soon fell asleep, and the guest was requested to lie down, as in hot weather in Egypt is required by most persons in the afternoon. But Mrs. Hillyard rose after an

hour's rest, and leaving the invalid, for whom it was essential that she should have as much repose as possible, still sleeping and watched over by one of the slaves, she went out to the garden, as the heat was somewhat abated, thinking it a good opportunity to try and see the white slave of whom she had heard so much.

The gardener was at work opening the little channels across the beds of vegetables, as the sun was getting low, and the time to water them was come. On her inquiring after Zobeide, he informed her that the bailiff and his wife were both absent at the village, where there was a merry-making at a relative's house, but that she was in their outer room—a sort of large shed it was in fact—sorting herbs; "for," observed the man, shrugging his shoulders, "she does not care for any merriment; however, when one is sick, by the prophet! she is good for something then, poor thing; no one is so clever about people in fever or such like."

The bailiff had, besides this outer-room, another inner one on the ground-floor of the house, and the use of the Salamlik, or large room, where men visitors were received when not needed by the Bey and his friends, which was the greater part of the time, of course, the place being only visited occasionally. But though they had space enough, the family lived just as Egyptian peasants generally do live, namely, in a constant muddle of dirt, disorder, and discomfort, which was only kept from becoming intolerable by the white

slave's efforts. Inured as she was to the peasant's habits, she drew a line somewhere, apparently, as the servants of the Bey declared a broom was frequently seen in her hands, and her own clothes were invariably clean.

The English visitor found her seated on a mat in the dark cool salamlik, sorting and tying up herbs which lay beside her. She saluted Irene in return for her courteous greeting, and then continued her occupation without displaying any interest in the stranger. Undaunted by this coldness, she came forward and seated herself beside the bundle of herbs, and said, "I heard of your success with the young Sitt, and I wished to see you."

"Why?" said the woman, not rudely, but certainly not very cordially.

"Because I too try to be of use to sick people; probably you have more experience, however, and I hear you are very kind and good to those who are ill."

"I am not kind," replied Zobeide, biting off the end of a thread with which she was tying a bunch of mint.

"Nay, my sister, you do yourself wrong," said Irene smiling; "pussy would tell me a different story I am sure;" and she pointed to a beautiful tortoiseshell cat which was rubbing its head against the knee of the slave, purring loudly, and showing very plainly that she was a privileged pet. "I am sure you have a kind heart, because animals like you."

"I am fond of animals and of quite little children," replied Zobeide after a pause, and unbending somewhat in her manner; "but I do not help sick people because I am good; for I am not good, nor even because I like them; it is only that I cannot bear to see pain. Also, while people are very weak and sick, they resemble children in helplessness; one is glad to help them, poor creatures!"

Irene secretly thought that *one* does and another does *not* care to help the suffering, and that it was evident here was benevolence, though the woman was crushed and her nature warped by long slavery and perhaps peculiar sorrows, as well as by a life of such degradation among illiterate and half-barbarous people. After a minute's silence she said, "I think the poor peasants feel grateful for kindness shown them in sickness. I know my poor friends are very grateful to me for the help I can give, and some have spoken to me about your skill."

"Yes, I know more than they, for they are so stupid about sickness!" she said, with a slight air of superiority, that showed she was not quite indifferent to the respect in which she was held; "but for gratitude, I do not know, nor does it matter to me; they are glad to get away as soon as they are well, and I do not want their chatter."

"Are your brother-in-law and his wife kind? Do they take care of you and give you all you want, as far as they can?" asked Irene.

"I work for them well, and if they did not give me what I need, I could not do so," she replied coldly.

"And where, if I may ask it, did you learn about herbs?" asked the indefatigable questioner.

"That was long ago, in my own country."

"You are not a Circassian, are you?"

"No, no, Sitt Irene, I am a Greek."

"*Your name* is Greek, though they told me you were English," she added, in a whisper, and with some appearance of interest.

"I am so; my father was English, and I lived most of my life in England, but one of my grandfathers was a Greek, that is why I am called Irene."

"Mashallah!" said the woman, looking at the loving dark eyes that were fixed upon her, "that is wonderful, really."

"And now tell me where you came from, will you not?" continued her new friend.

"I came from Candia in the old times. I was a prisoner of war in the terrible massacre, in the old time of Mohammed Ali."

Irene could not speak for a minute or two; her vivid imagination pictured it all in that brief space—the unspeakable horrors of the Turkish war, and those events over which time had thrown a mist of forgetfulness, but which had caused so much misery, so many broken hearts and desolate homes, so much crime and so much wretchedness, and she could not repress a groan. But quickly recovering herself, she

took the hands of the slave in hers and pressed them tenderly, saying, "God help and comfort you, dear sister! Oh, how I feel for you! You were old enough to recollect it all, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, I was grown up; I had been married a few months; my husband was slain"—the dead white of her skin was flushed for a moment, as she continued, with a strong effort, "my father, my brothers—all dead; I shall never see any of them again—never, never, never!" The last words were uttered in a low voice, as if coming from the very tomb of hope and happiness, and the strong frame shook, though no tear was shed; it was as if the bitter memories came up to the surface of the mind like the remains of a wrecked vessel surging up in the waves of the sea to tell of past woes.

"Lord God, comfort her!" said Irene, kneeling beside her on the mat, and looking upwards, she said a few words of earnest, simple prayer, very few, then bent down and kissed the poor woman. A hot tear fell on her hand as she did so; the ice was broken.

"I dare not stay longer now, the sun is nearly set; but you won't refuse to let me see you, will you, if the Sitt Fatmeh makes no difficulty, when I call next?"

"I will come if I can," whispered the other, and hearing footsteps Irene hastened to take her leave. She was determined to get at the woman's sad story,

and if possible to show her the way of peace ; but as she lived so near, and there would be time to see her again, she resolved not to say more at present, and merely commended her particularly to the kindness of the gentle young mistress when she went to the house to take leave.

CHAPTER VII.

ZOBEIDE'S STORY.

MRS. HILLYARD gathered a little more about Zobeide while returning through the fields at sunset that evening, escorted by one of her own sturdy peasants in his white robe and turban, and armed with a stout cane, knobbed like an Irish shillelah, in case of robbers (though in those days—a dozen years ago—robbers were very rarely heard of in Egypt), or of fierce dogs guarding the huts, which were always plentiful at nightfall. She learned from this man that till within a few months the white slave had lived on a portion of the Bey's property, divided from the rest by a slip of land belonging to another person, which accounted for her having never heard of the presence of one of those who are, with rare exceptions, never met with in the "peasants' country," but in the hareems of the wealthy. A few aged people in the village to which he belonged, which was not far from this part of the Bey's farm, could just remember Zobeide first coming to reside there. She had been quite a young woman, they told him, but very sullen in temper (perhaps what

they thought sullenness was dark despair); she used to cross herself and mutter words in an unknown tongue, and only scowled at them when they tried to make her say the "Fatthah," or opening words of the Koran, which are the special test of a Mohammedan's faith, and always taught to perverts. Her husband was the bailiff of the late father of Zohrab Bey; every one had wondered at the favour given to him of a white slave as a wife, but it was said they were all afraid of her in the hareem, and that for that reason she had been obliged to marry a peasant by her master or mistress. It was so long ago, no one knew exactly. After a time she became more quiet, and at last had consented to repeat the Fatthah, but that was because her husband threatened to take away her little son, the only creature she cared for, and a remarkably beautiful child. He said he would send the boy to his own parents, who lived some miles off, to bring him up, unless Zobeide became a Mohammedan, and that she should never see him again. She gave in then, poor creature, but her child did not live to grow up; he died of some illness that was among the children, at about four or five years old. For a long time she had noticed no one after that, and seemed overcome with grief, but rallied in time, and became much what she has been ever since, dry and cold in manner to every one, never smiling, unless to a little baby, but really doing many kind acts when any one was sick. The bailiff, her husband, was not

young when she was married to him, and he died ten years ago, and since that she had remained with his younger brother and his wife, who had a very large family, and was very useful in the house, taking care of the furniture that belonged to the master, besides minding the bailiff's children, and seeing after the fowls and many other matters. When they came to live in this house she came as a thing of course with them, and it was a mercy of God, the man concluded, for the young lady had been much the better, every one told him, for Zobeide's skill.

Irene meditated long on what she had heard, and resolved to take an early oppportunity of seeing her poor friend before the door, which seemed to be partly opened for her, should be closed again, and long habit resume its sway, or the fear of those around her induce her to be silent. She had observed her casting an anxious glance toward the garden every time any of the peasants were passing, and felt that Zobeide either was, or feared to be, watched by them. Turkish ladies, however, are rather ceremonious, and a visit two days running without some particular cause would not, she knew, be the thing for Sitt Fatmeh, though the gentle Ain el Hayat would welcome her with no feeling of annoyance at want of formality. But by chance the following day, having been out while the sun was still very hot, contrary to custom, to speak to the sheikh of the village on some pressing business, she paused to rest under a shady sycamore fig tree

at one of the Sakkias, belonging to the Bey, whose land she had to cross, and hardly had she dismounted and given her donkey in charge to the lad who accompanied her, than she caught sight of Zobeide in a sheltered nook under the very trunk of the great tree, sitting quite composed, and, as usual, busy with herbs. She explained that she had come to gather wild marigolds, which grew at this particular spot, and the distance from the garden being short, no one took any notice of her doing so, "But I never expected to see you out, lady, while it is yet warm." Though her face was as stony and indifferent as before, her voice and manner were much less impassive, and more friendly than before. As they were not likely to be interrupted, and the only persons near were the peasant boy guiding the buffalo at the wheel, and his father, who lay (as did the donkey boy, as soon as permitted,) soundly asleep in the shadow of a mud wall, Irene took a seat near Zobeide, and after a few kindly words begged to hear the rest of her history, or what she could recollect. It was evidently a relief, now that the ice was broken, to speak to one who had such loving sympathy to give; for she, with very little pressing, took up the thread of her sad tale.

"It was so terrible," she said, "I have only a confused recollection of most of what happened. I used, at one time, to dream of the cries and the burning houses and the fierce men with swords, all mixed up together; but for many years I have nearly forgotten

it. One thing I recollect more than anything else, the only thing I saw distinctly, the death of my husband. My poor father and brothers, I know, were slain, but I do not know how; my husband was cut down by the scimitars before me, and I flung myself upon his body; I remember that well. It seemed a long time I lay there, but perhaps was but a few minutes; who can tell? Then some one seized me, and was dragging me by the hair; I had long plaits of hair almost to my ancles then; people used to call them beautiful," she added, with a smile so bitter that it made Irene shudder; it told more than words could speak. "I tried to cling to him, my poor husband, you know, and then I saw his dagger sticking in his belt, and pulled it out quickly, and tried to pierce my own heart; but my hand was weak, or some one pulled my arm, for I only made a wound, deep, indeed, but not mortal. I have the mark yet. I recollect no more till I found myself on board a ship, in a cabin with a number of other prisoners, most of them very ill with sea-sickness. I felt nothing, not even the pain of the wound; I only wanted to die—nothing else. But then there was an old servant of my father's who had nursed me as a child (it was she taught me about herbs formerly); she was sitting by me, and she told me that when I fell covered with blood, she had been in the place looking for me, and that a Turk, a great man, as it afterwards appeared, seized hold of her and desired her to take

charge of me and follow him, threatening, if she refused, to kill her; she could speak a little Turkish, so she understood. She was willing enough to do all she could for the only survivor of her master's family. She nursed me only too well, for I did not wish to live. 'Let me die,' was all I said; and I wanted to throw myself into the sea, but she would not let me rise, and I could not move unassisted, and had to let her do as she would. I believe she gave me a good deal of opium, for I slept a great deal, and can hardly recollect anything of the voyage except that first day. We were a long time on the sea; I have heard that they go much quicker now by some new machines; but at last we landed, and I was still very ill for some time. When I was recovered they sent me to the hareem of the Bey's father; the Turk who had taken me was his friend, and had given me to him. I said I would not stay in a Moslem hareem, but would kill them if they wanted me to stay there. They laughed, but I really did try; I had a dagger, I forget how I got it, but I recollect striking about with it right and left, and one of the black men was wounded a little. They said, 'She is mad,' and advised that I should be thrown into the river. I was very glad, and said, 'Good, do so;' but the Bey said 'No,' that I was proud, and that he would humble me, and marry me to a poor peasant; and said I was sulky and fierce, and not so handsome as before, and I should go to the huts and live there.

"I heard this afterwards, through that old woman,

the Greek servant. I saw her afterwards, for I fell ill again, and they sent her to nurse me. She said they put opium in the food to stupefy me, and that I said any words they chose before the Mollah, being nearly insensible and foolish; so they married me, and when I came quite to myself I was in a mud-hut in a village not far from this. Then I became ill, as I said, and poor Katerina took care of me. When I got well she was sent back to the hareem, and I never saw her again; so I thought she died, otherwise she would have managed to come again—it was not so far from Cairo. They told me I was a Moslem," she added, bitterly smiling; "but I am nothing; I turned to stone. I don't know why I tell you all this, Sitt Irene; but I cannot help, now I have begun."

"It is because you feel that I love and pity you, oh, so deeply! so very much more than I can say," said Irene, wiping her tears. "It is better for you than to shut up all your troubles in your heart; but do not go on if it pains you."

"I am past being pained now. Think how many years I have lived here; it must be forty years and more. I am become a stone, and I shall remain so till I turn to dust."

"Was the peasant husband cruel?" said Irene.

"No; on the whole, he was kind in his way. They are proud of a white slave wife; they think it an honour among peasants, of course. He only once struck me in a passion. I remained for a week without

speaking, and would do nothing for him, so he never touched me again. I was never asked to do hard outdoor work; no white slaves are; and he had better wages than others on my account, so I was never ill-used."

"And your only child died, I was told," said Irene.

"Yes, Sitt Irene, and I was sorry at the time; a mother is a mother, and he was like my family in face. But even while I cried, I felt it was better for him to go. Death is better than life! I never had another, and I grew old early; though I am strong, sorrow soon made lines on my face, and my hair turned grey early; so when my husband died no difficulty was made about my living with his brother's wife to help her. My mother might have insisted on my marrying again; but who wanted an old woman? So I was left in peace at least. If any one is sick they are glad enough of my help. While they suffer I am anxious about them. I don't know why, but I try to save their lives, though I don't want people to live. It is a wicked place, the world."

"Dear Zobeide, you have really a tender heart, though your terrible sorrows make you think it is turned to stone. Tell me, do you never pray to God?"

"Never," she replied. "They say I am a good Moslem, and can say the Fatthah. I say it when they ask me; why not? But I have no belief."

"You were a Christian?"

"Yes, of course; but I forget all now."

"Do you recollect the name of Jesus Christ?"

"I must have heard, but I forget all. Yes, all, all is forgotten!" she continued, with the emphasis of despair.

"Oh, dear friend, God remembers *you*, if you forget Him; *He* never forgets."

"Why, then, did He let me come here?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell; it is one of the secret things why sorrow and suffering are found, and why some have more than others, and wicked men have such power to do harm to the innocent; but He never forgets; and, dear Zobeide, God it is who sent me here, His poor servant, to comfort you, and remind you of Him! This life is only short, and if we believe in God and the Saviour He sent to die for our sins and save our souls, we shall begin a new and glorious and happy life in Heaven. You forget this, if you ever understood it clearly, but God has sent me to tell you."

The woman looked at her without reply, but with genuine surprise as well as interest in her face, and Irene went on after a pause. "God sent me when He made things happen so that I met you and heard of you from my peasants, and put love and pity into my heart for you; that is His way now of sending His servants, and all who love and obey God *are* His servants." The only answer to this was a hot tear that fell on the hand Irene held. "Now listen, dear," said she softly, "I am going to say the Lord's Prayer to you;" and slowly she repeated it in Romaic,

hoping the once familiar words would strike her. Every member of the Greek church must have heard, even if she did not *understand* (for want of attention or of explanation) the Lord's Prayer. She knew forty years' disuse must have made the captive nearly forget her own language, so that Arabic was the tongue she thought in probably; but she had been going back into the past, and the very sound would be familiar; nor was she mistaken.

"I used to hear that, I know, but I cannot tell what the words mean, I forget so," she said sadly; "I cannot recollect their meaning now."

"No wonder, but I will say it in Arabic," said Irene; "the Lord's Prayer is in every language. It is our Lord Jesus who gives it to us." She then repeated the prayer, clause by clause, in Arabic first, and then in Romaic; when it was ended she said, "Our Lord's kingdom is for *ever and ever*, do not forget that, and there is no pain or sorrow in His kingdom; no war, nor bloodshed, nor cruelty, but love, joy, and peace; and we shall be in that kingdom if we believe in Jesus Christ, and are His servants. Think of that, Zobeide; no more sorrow, all peace and joy!"

The tears were falling now like summer rain, and the lady rose, and pressing her hand for farewell, went to the spot where her slumbering attendant lay, and roused him, and then remounted and rode home, pondering over what had passed, and so full of it, that it was well her steed knew his way, or she

might have ridden him on to the village a second time, instead of to the farm.

"How is it," thought she, "that so much sympathy is given to the negro slaves, and so very, very little to the white ones, who, if not so numerous, are yet quite enough to make one shudder at the thought of the desolated homes and savage cruelty wreaked on such as are captives of the sword and spear, and of the odious traffic in such as are stolen from their families or purchased from degraded parents; though I suspect these last are really much less numerous than the former; but any way it is a system of awful wickedness, and in the nineteenth century surely a change ought to come, and neither white nor black be treated as cattle sold for the service of their fellow-men. When, oh when will the gospel of peace reign, and the dark places of the earth be no more full of the habitations of cruelty? How little can such as I do! A few drops of kindness on the parched desert of sorrow and misery; yet that little I must do, and if one soul is saved, there is joy in heaven. Perhaps this dear woman will one day be before the throne of the Blessed, and then—but we have to do with the present now, and I must pray to be guided step by step." Her meditations were interrupted by entering her own property, undivided by wall or hedge or paling, but known by certain landmarks, and as the sun was now set she hurried her donkey forwards.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.

THE little barefooted damsel who waited on the English widow was watching at the open gate of the court-yard when the mistress was seen approaching across the field from which a well-laden camel was just bearing the last golden sheaves, while the peasant girls and their fathers, who had been the reapers, were slowly following with cheerful faces ; for the day's work was done, the mothers already preparing supper at the doors of their huts in the faint and rapidly-fading light of evening; but the moon was rising, and by its mellow rays they would enjoy the simple fare rendered delicious by healthy labour, and then, while the men smoked their cherry-stick pipes, the young lasses would sport and play in the cool air till, weary with exercise, they lay down on their mats to enjoy a sweeter sleep than often falls to the lot of a jewel-decked lady in a hareem.

The little Zeynab would not be sorry to have a scamper in the moonlight, if her kind lady came early enough ; but though she loved play, being only eleven years old, she could work well under proper manage-

ment, and had prepared the frugal meal more neatly than would be supposed possible by any one who had seen her mother's hut and the group there, squatting round a great earthen pan of stewed vegetables, dipping in pieces of bread with their fingers, and clearing up the remains with the same implements. Zeynab had only been half a year with Mrs. Hillyard (for the damsels married early, according to Egyptian custom), yet she was fairly trained already, and had spread a snowy cloth on the little table with cup and plate perfectly clean, and a vase of fresh flowers beside them, a small home-made loaf of European bread, and a dish of curds and cream, and she now ran to make the tea, and bring the jug of new milk, first covering everything with wire covers, for fear of the insects, and even recollected to carry the pet cat under her arm lest, in her brief absence in the kitchen, a velvet paw might be inserted under the said cover, the temptation of cream being strong, especially as it was now considerably past pussy's usual supper hour.

"Here I am, Zeynab," said her mistress, hastily dismounting, and leaving the donkey loose to trot straight to the manger in the yard, where his beans, partially crushed in the little hand-mill, awaited him, mingled with chopped straw. "I am rather later than I intended. All is ready, I see, you and puss awaiting me; that is a good girl! Take in this nice basket of early figs, which they made me bring from the Bey's garden; here is a handful for yourself. Now,

while I am at tea you may go and have a game with your little sisters, but do not be late."

With a smile dimpling all over her merry brown face, the youthful servant bounded away, and left the lady to her lonely meal; not, however, that she felt a bit lonely! as she often said to her brother, besides the privileged cat and dog, which, Robinson Crusoe like, she admitted to sit on each side of her, there were cheerful voices generally sounding outside the windows, and often cheerful faces popped in at the door for a moment from some of the various peasants or servants, withdrawing politely when they saw her at table, but giving a good-humoured greeting as they did so. Irene had large sympathies, and for that reason could almost always guess when people were in trouble or joy, and generally found out what they needed, and if in her power, would help them to it, and comfort them if not; so it was no wonder, therefore, that she had cheerful faces about her. She was more serious and pensive than usual this day, for what she had heard occupied her much, and she was reflecting on it, and thinking what to do next. "If I have waked up the old memories, and yet do not succeed in leading the poor woman to the feet of the Saviour, I shall have done her more harm than good," said she to herself. "The interest is aroused certainly, but she is terribly ignorant; and after living so long in darkness, having forgotten the little she knew of God and forced to conform outwardly to what she

abhorred as belonging to her enemies, it will not be easy to get her to see the truth all at once; it must be cautiously done, for I see she fears the people about her; the furtive glances she cast round to ascertain that the men were not near this evening under the tree showed how she dreads their finding out anything of her real dislike to their faith. The danger of suicide being gone, and the instinctive love of life having returned, she has a certain degree of satisfaction in the respect the peasants pay her, as well as in the alleviation of suffering; though she will not allow it, poor thing! And I must not be deceived by her emotion at hearing well-known words associated with the happy past, into thinking more is done than *really* is; just a beginning, I hope, at any rate."

She rose, and summoning a boy by clapping her hands, sent him to call Zeynab to take away the supper things, and then, lighting a candle, began to turn over and mark sundry passages in two large Bibles, an Arabic and an English; she glanced at a third in Romaic, but decided it would not do. The knowledge of her poor friend was too little. It was not probable that, brought up originally in a Christianity so corrupted as that of the Oriental Churches, she had ever at any time been familiar with much of the Scripture, or that she had learned to look on Christ as the sole way of salvation. Mrs. Hillyard knew many both of the Coptic and Greek Churches (which are similar in most of their doctrines and ceremonies), and

she was aware that although much better off than members of the Roman Catholic Church, inasmuch as the Scripture is not forbidden to the laity, their people were generally left in ignorance of it, and that both clergy and laity were lamentably ignorant of the Gospel, and looked on the Virgin and saints as necessary aids to salvation, and paid them reverence and even worship. She needed teaching hardly less than the Moslems around her; in some respects almost more indeed, for they were at least honestly revering what they professed, and not crushed by tyranny into deceit.

It was necessary to have patience, as meeting Zobeide out of doors was a chance that might not again occur for some time, and she thought it too soon to go to the hareem again, lest the older lady should consider it a liberty, but many a prayer was sent up to heaven for the captive of forty years. She had not very long to wait for an occasion; after two or three days she received a letter from the Bey, at Marseilles, enclosing a note for his wife. He wrote, he said, to ask her to give him letters to her family in England, as he was thinking of visiting that country, as he had been told by a fellow-passenger that late in summer would not be so suitable a time for him to visit London.

Of course she could go to the ladies at once without ceremony, under these circumstances, and did not even wait to send a messenger, but set out as soon as the heat was somewhat abated, only desiring her servant

to precede her and knock at the door, when within a hundred yards of the house, and to inform the boab that she was bringing a letter from the master.

The news travelled quickly from the boab to Osman, the black aga, and from him to a negrees, from her again to a white slave, and, lastly, to the lady herself—the younger one—who started up without a trace of her usual languor on hearing the joyful words "a letter from the Bey!" and stood at the doorway of the anteroom to receive her guest.

"Welcome, my sister, always welcome, but thrice welcome to-day!" she said, with beaming eyes, as she cordially embraced Irene, and led her into the room. "Thou art bringing news of my dear lord, Sitt Irene; truly this is a white day!"

"Now here is your letter," said her friend, producing a small folded paper, "and after you have read it I will read you mine, for your husband has written me a letter in French; he is at Marseilles, and wishes for a letter to my family, as he is about to visit England, with God's permission."

It took the young scholar a full quarter of an hour to decipher fully the contents of her not very long letter. Before she had finished it, however, she recollected that her mother-in-law, who had been at her toilette when the visitor arrived, had not yet been informed of the news, formally that is, for of course, the slaves had let her know, but, remembering her duty, and due respect, Ain el Hayat clapped her hands and

sent a proper message by the slave, who answered her summons.

"She is about dressed now, so it is time enough," she said, as she turned to her letter again, and had just finished it, when the great lady, with a smiling face, entered exclaiming, as Irene greeted her,

"Now, God bless thy hands and thy feet, my daughter! I must kiss thy head for having brought me good reports of my son;" and she kissed her visitor's head accordingly, a high mark of respect and regard, and then her cheeks, after which, seating herself on the divan, she listened with delighted interest to the somewhat bald and brief epistle; it was chiefly affectionate messages and assurances of his own good health, &c.

Irene then translated the French letter aloud, and explained to the ladies what at first puzzled them: that England was an island, and, therefore, the second voyage alluded to in the letter was necessary to reach it.

"The Bey had some fine maps," said she; "if you have one here I will show you his route."

"Ah, I am sorry," said Ain el Hayat; "but his books and all are in the city; however, if you would teach me a little geography, I could send to the secretary to let me have the great map. The Bey was beginning to teach me about it; I know something already: how the world goes round the sun, and about the great seas."

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"Would to God," interrupted the mother, "that the Bey were safe at home, away from these dangerous seas, and then he might teach thee what he likes, daughter; however, if it amuses thee, there can be no harm in what he permitted;" and she gave a puff from her pipe.

Meantime her visitor had sketched with the reed-pen and a sheet of Arab paper, that lay on the stand near her, a pretty accurate map of France, with the silver streak, and England on the opposite side, and amused Ain el Hayat by tracing her husband's journey from Egypt to Marseilles, and so on to England, much as a mother or school-teacher with her pupils, only that her manner with grown-up learners was, of course, very different. Anything of the condescension of a regular teacher would have affronted Sitt Fatmeh who was accustomed to look on every thing and every body from a height like many in her position, and far from revering European ladies as being more educated, was inclined to look down on any who were not "Islam," and was so entirely ignorant as to have no respect for learning (outside the Koran). She looked on geography as a fine thing, because her son was said to be eminent in it, but perfectly useless for women, though, as a harmless amusement, Ain el Hayat might pore over maps provided she did not spend much time on it, lest her eyes should suffer from the fatigue.

The dear mother, of course, did not know that

the mind of every rational being, if left without exercise, gets mouldy and deteriorates as the being advances in years, which is, perhaps, the reason that in Egypt a child is often charming; a young girl sprightly and amusing; a middle-aged woman generally dull and tiresome; and an old woman odious. There are many exceptions; there are natives that no neglect and mismanagement can quite spoil, and there are some who have received a little smattering of some sort of teaching, but the mass are gradually losing the charms of youth, and only getting more knowledge of evil, and more occupied with the earthly things that they must soon lose, and, therefore, clutch the tighter as they grow old.

Mrs. Hillyard knew that the Gospel was the only learning that can make wise to salvation, and wished ever to give it the first and chief place, when permitted to help her unenlightened sisters in any way; but where leisure and means allowed of it, she was glad to supplement it by some secular instruction on many accounts, and knew that if not given an undue pre-eminence, the intellectual knowledge was an aid to the spiritual.

After telling them something about the mother and brother, to whom she was sending a letter of introduction for the Bey, she asked if she might not read a chapter from her Bible, and with her winning look turned to the great lady, and said, "I think Sitt Fatmeh would like what I had planned to read you."

"I do not like Christian books," replied that lady solemnly (she had of course never read or heard one in her life). "I told my son if his wife was to read there is only one really good book, which is ours; however, he is master, and is both wise and good; I cannot blame him in any way."

"But, dear Sitt Fatmeh, I have read in your Koran a good deal, and it says in one place that the Gospel is good to read."

"Truly?" asked Sitt Fatmeh, who had in fact never read her own book, but only heard a few extracts which were chanted out behind the curtain on festival days and during the fast.

"I will show you the words another day; I will bring my copy on purpose."

"What! You have a copy of *our* book?"

"Yes, one in Arabic and one in French. But, dear lady, do now listen to this; it is out of the Book of Genesis, written by Moses.

"Him! Moses the prophet? I did not know you had words of his; they ought to be good."

Irene took this for consent, and read the first and second chapters of Genesis, giving a few simple explantions in a manner so perfectly free from anything patronizing that pride itself could not take offence, while her earnestness and clearness were almost irresistible.

Both the listeners were much interested, but the younger far the most. She had heard some of it

before ; indeed, her face was full of lively intelligence at the history so old yet ever new.

"But it was corn, and not a tree, in the garden," said Sitt Fatmeh, who knew the garbled account of the fall given by Mahommedans.

"Moses says it was a fruit, pleasant to the eye, and good for food, which you know corn is not, unless first prepared in a long and troublesome way to fit it for man's use; and a fruit would be more likely to tempt the childish mind of Eve. Still the point of importance is that whether she took ears of corn or fruit, she disobeyed God's command, and listened to the evil one."

"The truth is with thee, and it is good," was the reply, as the hearer gravely lighted a fresh pipe, the slave holding a small pair of tongs with a live coal towards her for the purpose.

While she was thus occupied, Ain el Hayat whispered, "who was the woman's seed? What does that mean?"

"That was Jesus the Son of man and the Son of God, born of the virgin in the likeness of sinful man, but without sin, because he was the Spirit of the Most High God."

"He of whom we read the other day; the Lord Jesus who drove out the evil spirits from the poor man? Ah, now I see it, He had power over the evil one and all his demons; He bruised the serpent's head—yes, I understand now; and you said He can

deliver our souls from Satan's power now. It is a beautiful story; I wish to read it over to you again, to be sure I have the words right."

"Read, daughter," said the mother-in-law; "the Bey would not allow you, if it were wrong, and I dare say it is pretty."

She listened with pleasure, for up to a certain point her mind was interested; but with the other it was different: her *soul* was awake, and her very face wore a new expression.

There was an illuminated marker in Irene's Bible which excited the admiration of both the ladies as she was going to close the volume, and they begged to examine it, and to have the motto read to them: "With thee is the fountain of life" were the words.

"Why that is my name," exclaimed the Circassian; "what can this mean, Sitt Irene?"

"The fountain of life is with God, as was meant to be implied by your name, but these words are from the Psalms of David (he was a great prophet, you know), and they mean more than the fact that God is our Creator. Life everlasting is given us through Him who, proceeding from God, and being the very Spirit of God Himself, is thus the spring or fountain of that life, as I read to you from the Gospel how Jesus said, 'He that believeth in Me *hath* everlasting life;' and again it is said, 'Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him drink of the water of life freely.'"

She paused and looked into the thoughtful eyes in silence. The entrance of the coffee now interrupted them, and then of a slave with flowers, and the elder lady went to the divan at the other end of the room for some purpose. Ain el Hayat rose to put away her precious book, and smiled when she observed that her friend had put the marker into it.

"Dear one," said she, "I pray that the fountain of life may be revealed to you by the Spirit." She pressed her hands without another word, and then observing that the sun would soon become overpowering, resisted their invitations to delay, having business at home; but she first begged to say a word to the white slave Zobeide, if Sitt Fatmeh would allow.

"What do you want of her?" said that lady, who was apt to be a little put out at anything unusual; and as a rule Eastern ladies are not wont to meddle with or even notice one another's slaves without some particular reason.

Irene was, however, no novice, and had a reason—not the chief one, certainly, but a real and good one—for wanting to speak to Zobeide.

"I want to ask what she would advise for the child of one of my peasants who was burnt, and his mother put on ground coffee, and then ink, and I know not what, and the place is worse to-day. She might know some herbs that would be good."

Sitt Fatmeh was really kind-hearted when a case

was brought before her notice, and said at once she would send the woman to Sitt Irene's that evening at sunset.

"She can stay the night, if you like, and see the child again in the morning," she added; "the bailiff, her brother-in-law, is going to the village a little before sunset to bring some things we want, and passes near your place, I believe, so he can leave her there."

It is needless to say the arrangement was accepted with pleasure and gratitude; it was beyond her hopes, and she could scarcely conceal her delight. She returned home, and by sunset was awaiting her visitor with the little patient.

CHAPTER IX.

WHO IS SHE?

AS far as she could take pleasure in anything, the white slave was really pleased to go to the English lady's house, and to be sought for as a person of importance had probably a certain charm to her in spite of herself, as it were. She was respectfully greeted by the peasants at the little farm, and conducted to the salamlik, where the mistress of the house was sitting by the burnt child, who was crouched up in his mother's lap on a mat. Zobeide, after due salutations, examined the case, and looked as grave and knowing as a doctor meanwhile. Long experience, and some little real knowledge of remedies, as far as herbs to be obtained in the country went, with that peculiar faculty which makes some persons nurses by nature, combined to give her a considerable amount of success in all ordinary cases of accident. She smiled rather contemptuously when the poor woman suggested a charm, and desired to have certain articles brought which Mrs. Hillyard provided, and soon had the little sufferer properly attended to, and his pain alleviated in some degree After giving her directions, she was conducted

over the farm by her kind hostess (who said she wanted her advice about some young chickens), and finally brought into the sitting-room, where, to her surprise, she was requested to take her place at the table, which was laid in English fashion, and spread with a simple but abundant supper of different kinds of bread, milk, fruit, native cheese, and olives. So the free woman and the bond woman broke bread together and sat side by side; and as soon as the girl had cleared everything and brought the candles, they sat down on the sofa, and Irene opened the large Arabic Bible. The door was ajar, and she called to some one outside, and to the fresh amazement of the slave, not only the steward, who, being a Christian, she might suppose came in as a matter of course, but two rough-looking men, whose dress she thought showed them to be Moslem peasants. A few Copts, indeed, are scattered among the Moslem inhabitants of the villages around Cairo, and in dress and appearance are nearly similar, often quite so, but they are a small minority in this province. The names given to these men proved them without doubt to be genuine followers of the prophet, being Mohammed and Hossein, yet they sat down on the mat quite as if it were the most natural thing in the world to sit and hear the Bible. And so it was; Irene had always told her poor friends in the country that God's Book was meant for all. She never said anything when distinctly questioned about their own

views, but urged them to listen to the words of Scripture, and only gave the simplest and clearest explanations possible, selecting the portions most interesting and most useful, varying the Gospel lessons and stories with some of the Old Testament accounts most likely to profit and delight her auditors. They knew that she read about this hour, which was arranged on purpose as the most convenient to them, and they came in freely, if disposed to do so. She had chosen the history of Joseph's being sold into Egypt, and as she closed the book made a few remarks showing the way in which he was a type of Christ. When the short, earnest prayer was over and the men were gone, she talked a little with her guest, who was much less silent and gloomy than before.

"Why did God let the wicked men triumph so and sell their brother?"

"You shall hear the rest to-morrow, and you will see how good came out of evil. Evil men will have their punishment, but God can turn the wrath of man to praise Him;" and she went on to show the captive how her own long and sad captivity might end in brightness, if not in this world, in the new home above.

"And now," said she, when she thought her visitor had had as much as her mind could take in, "do tell me your real name?"

"I forget; I have heard no name but Zobeide so long."

"Nay, think a little, the name your mother and

father called you in childhood;" and Irene quoted the familiar words summoning the child to its parent's knee, in the Romaic language, for she had often heard it from her maternal grandfather when very young applied to herself, and afterwards from her aunt who was settled in Alexandria and married to a Greek merchant.

There was a moment's pause, and then the slave looked at her sadly and said, "I used to be called Eurydice."

"I shall call you so when we are alone," said her friend, rising and taking her by the arm to lead her to the room prepared for her, the same that her brother occupied when he came for a day or two, or his little boys, when the whole family were at the farm. Though simple almost to poverty in its arrangements, for having only the little girl as female servant, Irene did not care to put more than was actually needful for comfort, yet to eyes so long used to the mud-huts of the peasants, the dust and dirt, the ragged mats and unclean cushions that formed the bedding, the total absence of furniture as of neatness and order, the simple but spotless bed, the snowy mosquito curtains, and nice washing apparatus, looked like a luxurious arrangement; nor was the feeling of being treated as a friend and guest less strange and pleasing.

When the first rays of the sun penetrated the latticed windows she was up, and wanted to return at

once, but Irene begged her to stay and breakfast first. She always took her coffee and milk very early, and her guest must join before setting out to the Bey's farm, whither one of the peasants was ready to escort her, with a donkey duly saddled in native fashion. The walk was scarcely half an hour, but the lady thought it looked kind to the guest, and also enabled her to show the mistress, who had obligingly sent her, that her kindness was not trespassed upon by any needless delay.

She ascertained during breakfast the name of the white slave's family; it came back to her, as Irene expected, when going over some little details about the past, and she also recollected that her father had had two brothers associated in merchant business with him, one of whom died while she was still a child, leaving a son who was brought up by her father, and who, she believed, had not died in the massacre; she fancied he had gone to some distant place before he was much older than her brothers, who were quite youths when they fell victims to cruelty and rage. She could not recollect her cousin's name, nor anything about him, beyond this vague story, but Mrs. Hillyard had a strong suspicion that it was no other than her own grandfather. The family name was the same as that given by the slave, Iconopolo—not an uncommon Greek name at all. The coincidence alone would have told nothing; but there had been a sad story in her grandfather's family, that

in one of the terrible Turkish massacres in the days of old, at least, when he was a young man, several members of his house had lost their lives and property in the island of Crete or Candia, where they resided, he being in Syria at the time. In those days there was little communication between different places in the East, and that little slow and irregular. There was not much letter writing, being no post-offices, and but few (compared with the present time) who could even read; the women of even highly respectable families of Greek or Syrian race could never write a word. News was brought chiefly by verbal messages, or letters sent by private hands. Before Theodore Iconopolo learned that there had been scenes of such terror and misery in his native island some time had elapsed; and though he had endavoured to ascertain the fate of his uncle's family, he only learned in a vague way that all were supposed to have perished in the massacre. He was at that time settled in North Syria, but ultimately removed, as before-mentioned, to Egypt. He had never been able to hear anything more than the first vague report, and had long ceased to think of the painful subject. People seemed to get used to a sort of doubt, which with our present greater facilities for communication would be intolerable. Irene had, however, heard and been greatly interested in the account from her uncle, who had assured her that as far as he knew not a single survivor had been left,

except a very distant branch of the family residing in another part of the island, and having another name, being related to him on the female side.

She resolved to make fresh inquiries now, and to say nothing to her guest unless she ascertained her suspicion to be correct beyond doubt. Her brother Edmund was acquainted with the English Consul at Crete, and also with two or three Greek merchants there, having once spent a few months on the island for change of air, the climate being considered very fine. She therefore wrote to him when she had taken leave of Zobeide, and gave a full account of her recollections of the story told by her uncle, and of the account given her by Zobeide, and asked him to write to these friends, and beg them to get for her the dates as nearly as possible, the place, and every particular that they could obtain, from any aged persons of the once wealthy and prosperous family destroyed in that terrible period. Even now, when steamers have replaced sailing vessels, and things in general are a little less tedious than formerly, matters are slow enough in the East, and she knew a good while must elapse before a reply could be received; at least three weeks, perhaps more. So she put aside conjecture for the time as much as she could, and devoted herself to the many affairs demanding her attention, especially the care of the poor and sick. Of course it had been necessary to reply to the Bey's letter at once by giving him the introductions

he asked; but as he was to travel rather slowly, as a friend had asked him to go through Belgium with him *en route* for England, and visit some of the most remarkable cities, she had time to send a letter to her sister, giving some private information about the expected guest before he should arrive. A glance at part of her letter will take up this thread in the twisted lines of our tale.

After relating all the story of the white slave, and her suspicions about her, she went on to say that whether this was true or not, she intended on his return to ask the Bey for papers of freedom for the woman, and then—for she was certain he would grant the request—to take her to live at the farm as a sort of housekeeper and assistant about the sick and poor. "Possibly I shall write to him, indeed,"—she wrote—"for one dares not trust to life, and a wife is not an *heir* in this country; otherwise, whatever might befall the Bey, the poor captive would be in good hands. The Sitt Ain el Hayat is a sweet creature, and so well disposed to the truth. Oh, if I can see her really enter the fold, I cannot express the joy it would be! But I must now speak of her husband, quite as interesting in his way, and give you a hint or two, as he is to spend some little time with you. I know my brother will be all that is kind; but you are older in Christianity, as well as in years, and mother too will be so deeply interested in one from the land she visited years ago with father! You and she, however, have never yet

had a Mohammedan to stay with you, nor, I think, have ever met one you could speak to easily; for the Bey talks not a little broken French or English, but the first like a native; the second tolerably for a foreigner.

"There is no fear of your making the common mistake of supposing it a breach of hospitality to speak on the Christian religion to a Moslem (I have often met with Egyptians who had been in England for two or three years even, and returned without having had a word of the Gospel ever put before them, the families they had stayed with having made it a point of honour to hide their candle under a bushel, if they had one to hide! I am more afraid of dear mother going too far, or rather, I should say, too *rapidly* on the right road, and forgetting that if we pull a door open with great and sudden eagerness, it sometimes slams shut again from the reaction; I mean, we must not *force* things and forget the prejudices and bringing up of the person we have to deal with. A Moslem's religion is twined up with his political, social, and domestic life so minutely, that the whole rope, as it were, has to be untwisted before he can be free from error, and the very admixture of truth in their book makes it harder in some respects to refute than if, like the heathen doctrines, it was all wrong throughout.

"Perhaps the intense self-righteousness of Moslems is after all the hardest point about them; their notion that in the *end* all who are Islam are safe, strengthens

them in this belief, and though many make pilgrimages to Mecca to gain purification from sin, I do not find that there is a sense of being *lost*, either with or without pilgrimages and prayers. The only thing absolutely essential to *final* salvation being of 'el Islam.' Mind, I don't say this is book doctrine, only it is what is held by nearly all women and most men I have come in contact with (I know more of the poor, of course, than of the better sort). Many of the higher class of men, who have studied in France for a few years, hold to their own religion mainly from political motives, and are secretly a sort of Deists; but they generally cling pretty strongly to the forms which belong to their country, and which would not only give offence to abandon, but cost in all probability all they hold dear in the world, perhaps life itself. The infidel books in French, so much read by the more cultivated ones, and the vices of so-called Christians in the great cities of Europe, and, alas, in too many who have settled here, are books that can be read, unhappily, alike by all who see them! I told Zohrab Bey once that an *ungodly Christian* was a thing that could not exist, a simple contradiction in terms, and that the persons he quoted to me were no more Christians than a pig would be a sheep because he had got into a sheepfold! He replied, 'The shepherd would drive out the unclean beast!' 'Yes,' I replied, 'because he knows that swine will always remain such, but the

Almighty can change even vile sinners in His mercy, and gives them the opportunity of repenting.' I said no more; here a little and there a little is the best way. Long preachings, from one of our sex, especially, would never answer; but a clear reason of the faith that is in us, a readiness to answer any intelligent question, in short, in any way that seems to offer itself, the putting forward the light of the Gospel, this is all we can do, except constantly praying that our zeal may be tempered with prudence, and our prudence warmed by the fire of Divine love. There! forgive my preaching, dear Clara. And now one word on practical matters ere I close: don't omit to let him see some of our most interesting institutions for Christian charity, the glory of our country, and one or two of the best hospitals and orphan schools, &c. So now farewell; I must not add a word, more unless I were guilty of that abomination—*crossing!*"

CHAPTER X.

THE POOR MAN'S CAUSE.

ABOUT a fortnight after the visit of the Greek slave to Mrs. Hillyard's farm, that lady arrived at her brother's residence in the city, just as the family were sitting down to breakfast, at eight o'clock, and the two elder children, who were privileged to be at the parlour-table, rose in tumultuous joy to greet Aunt Irene, who was a great favourite.

"Welcome as a shower of rain would be!" cried her sister-in-law Esther, kissing her affectionately, while her brother cleared a place at the table, and put a chair for her. "Now, sister, not a word till you have had your coffee; it is quite hot, for we had but just begun breakfast. Etty and Harry, attend to your Aunt, and ask no questions about kittens and donkeys till she is rested; it is a long ride at this time of year, and the sun is quite scorching, even at seven o'clock, in the open fields."

Irene wanted, however, to tell her story, and had to be silenced two or three times by her brother's affectionate remonstrance, "Now sister, do be quiet."

She was very frequently given that old-fashioned title in her family, for she had preserved her Oriental fondness for the words sister and brother.

"Now, Edmund, dear, I have finished my coffee, and you must hear why I came prancing in without any warning so early: I have a really important business, and you can help me. I have to go to the law courts, and without a gentleman I could hardly go, and you know them so well."

"There, dear sister, that is really such a piece of feminine inaccuracy as I should hardly expect from you. I have to go to the land agency courts, my business being about land, but there are others of all kinds."

"We shall have to go to two at least," replied his sister, "the land and the criminal courts. Now I must tell my story, or it will get so hot for being out, and, of course, they will keep us hours. I thought this was not one of your busiest days, but if it is, send your clerk with me."

"No, I can spare a couple of hours very well," said he, throwing himself on the sofa beside her and making a sign to the children to be perfectly quiet.

"Perhaps," said Irene, "you heard of the murder which was committed on Tuesday, in the country—a man found dead with evident marks of violence, upon the Shubra road (there were three men, and two escaped and ran off), or rather, in a field not very far from the well-known road."

"Yes, I heard of it, and it was said, by one of the two who escaped, that the assailants were negroes."

"So we all heard," continued Mrs. Hillyard, "and it was generally believed that they were either runaway slaves or free negroes in the employment of one of the proprietors in the neighbourhood. The man robbed and murdered had a large sum of money upon him; he was a Mohammedan, and was returning from the city with an acquaintance who lived near; the third was only a peasant who chanced to be walking in the same direction, not in any way connected with the others. Three men rushed out upon them, and the rich man was first knocked down, the others tried to defend him, or say they did, but being unarmed they were compelled to fly. Great suspicion fell on some blacks who were on the land next to mine upon the south side."

"Not Zohrab Bey's?" said her brother.

"No, his Abbadaeh is to the north of mine; this belongs to a black man, an aga of one in high quarters; he is immensely rich, they say. Well, the suspicion may be a false or a true one, I can't tell, but he bribed heavily. It is said his people, who had been apprehended, were all set free without an examination. And now, brother, comes my trouble: one of my peasants has been apprehended and put in prison."

"One of your tenants?"

"More than a tenant; he works for me. Such a

quiet, honest fellow, I do not believe there is a chance of his having been engaged in this wickedness."

"But how," exclaimed her sister-in-law, "can they take him up without some reason, however bad, for implicating him?"

"Dear Esther, have you lived here nearly ten years and do not know the circle within circle which complicates all transactions? There is some spite against him probably. His wife thinks the sheikh of the village is his enemy, because he was so late in paying his taxes last year. His wife had been ill, and there was a bad Nile; and then he was foolish, and would spend money on the wedding of his little girl—so ridiculous, for she was only twelve, and I told him to wait at least a year or two; but he was like them all—must do as the neighbours did, or be laughed at. So the money went, and the taxes had to wait; and I am much mistaken if the sheikh's grudge is not at the bottom of it."

"Money seems to be at the bottom of everything in Egypt," observed Esther.

"Unless it is at the top," said her husband, laughing. "Well, sister, we will go when you like; but I am afraid it will be a hard matter to get the poor fellow set free, if you have not witnesses to prove an *alibi*."

"I have three, Edmund, two of my tenants and the lad who is my own servant; all know that he was selling corn at Calioub on that day, and returned at least two hours before the murder happened. But if

the sheikh chooses to say he was not in the village at such a time, these witnesses will be looked on as liars, merely speaking to save a friend, and one is his own brother, certainly—but if it *is* true, I know the trouble is, how to *prove* it. The aga proved the innocence of *his* servants by paying a good sum of money, for being a busy time of year, it was inconvenient to have any of them taken away. I am not rich enough to do so. What is to be done, Edmund?"

"We will go and see at the police-court first, and then at the others. Have you thought of getting the necessary papers; I mean the witness's affirmation?"

"Here they are; we got these, I and my agent, last night," said Irene, pulling out three pieces of coarse yellowish paper, signed with Arabic seals, and written over in that language.

"Such writing!" said Edmund; "it would take a better scholar than I am to read them with perfect accuracy; but I make out that they all witness the same thing, namely, that Hassan, son of Mohammed, was at Calioub till the afternoon of that day, and on his own field by sunset."

"Yes, and the accusation is founded upon nothing further than the fact that during a part of that day the man was not as usual in his own field at work, or, as occasionally, in my stable; they have no other atom of plausibility for this cruel apprehension. The murder was committed after sunset, and the murderer

seen to be a negro. Hassan is an Egyptian, with not a trace of the negro about him, and is proved to have been at home at sunset. Only he has not a bag of money to prove his innocence."

"Oh, poor Egypt! But now come, dear Irene, put on your hat and let us be off."

"Shall Girgas, the agent, go with us; he is below?" said she. "He only went to see a friend while I drank coffee and talked to you. He can witness that the man went to Calioub to sell wheat, though at the hour of his return he did not happen to be at the farm."

"Well, let him come, if it is only to give a greater air of dignity to our visit by having a third person. Don't expect us till you see us, Esther; you know what law courts are here."

They drove to the police-office, and after making the depositions, were sent on to another, which was in a large building where various kinds of business were transacted. Deeds and conveyances were drawn up in one part, divorce cases were seen to in another, accusations for assault and robbery in a third, and so on. The great court, which was open to the street, and was only roofed over, had flights of wide stone steps on two sides, which were crowded with persons coming and going, many women being among them. A native friend of Mr. Hillyard's happened to be there, and found them, promising to give any assistance in his power, and to find the right person for their business.

"What are all these women for?" inquired Irene, pointing to the black-veiled females, whose robes of dark blue or checked mantles showed them to be peasants, except a few in shabby black silk coverings, who were citizens of a somewhat higher class, although apparently not very well off.

"Oh, those come about divorce cases; heaps of them are here constantly to get divorce papers signed, or to try and get their rights, poor things! the portion due to them on being sent away, or that due for their children—often difficult or impossible to obtain; then those townswomen in the black 'haharahs' are chiefly widows trying to get justice and something to eat. The husbands' relations grudge them every piastre, and often they have to struggle hard to get the little which the law accords them."

"Truly," said Irene, "they do not recollect here that God speaks severely against judges who allow the widow and the fatherless to be wronged."

"Recollect it! my dear lady, they recollect nothing except what is impressed on their memory by a bag of money. God is great. Here and there is possibly one who knows what justice means, but 'a shower in summer' is not more rare."

In that dry climate, where the very little rain that falls is in winter or early spring, this comparison said a great deal to the hearer's mind.

"And who are those men with long sticks, who are so picturesque in their crimson robes and white

turbans, that I wish I had my sketch-book at hand?" she said presently, turning to her brother.

"Oh, they are the attendants, or guardians if you like, of the place. See, just before us, two of them are trying to keep order;" and he pointed to a group of turbaned peasants and partly-veiled country women, who were evidently in much excitement. The foremost woman was trying to get close to one of the desks or stalls occupied by the writers, on one of which a handsome man, in a spotless white turban and orange-striped caftan, was leaning, his reed-pen behind his ear, with great coolness, answering her vehement questions, while an older woman and the men of her party were endeavouring to calm her and pull her back. Irene heard her exclaiming, when they came near enough to understand her words, "To-morrow, after to-morrow, do you say? No, I will not wait any more. How many times have I come here and been told 'after to-morrow?' My lease is to be taken up, and meantime my children may starve because that son of a dog, my husband, that villain on whom may ten thousand plagues alight! I say, who chooses to defraud me of everything. Was I not his wife?" turning back to the elderly man, who was pulling her sleeve and trying to quiet her by saying,

"My daughter, peace; be patient."

"Was I not his wife, and a good one? Did I not wait on and serve him, and bring him sons? and now am I not turned off for nothing but that he may choose a younger. May her eyes—"

"Stop, stop, daughter, don't curse so!" cried the woman. "There shall be justice. Fear not, only wait, and he shall give money for the children's support. See"—and she opened part of her hand to display a piece of silver; putting it in on the desk under a paper, so as to make a pretence of hiding it, she concluded, "This worthy scribe will speak for us to the judge, I am certain," smiling and winking at the man, but, poor soul! her bribe was not large enough for his rapacity, and he muttered something, pushing back the money and turning to his writing again with a determined air.

"Oh, for pity, do me justice! my poor children have nothing," cried the younger woman again, her angry tones sinking to a wail, as at this moment the men in red, with their wands, interposed, and not roughly, but very decidedly, made her move back; and as the group was partly coaxed, partly hustled into the anteroom, Irene heard the words of "after to-morrow" called after her, and could not refrain from saying, "after to-morrow is the curse of Egypt."

Irene's kind heart ached for the woman. Right or wrong, the delay and the bribe-taking were abominable; but what could she do? Not long after, she had the same thing to go through herself. She was told that Hassan's case was deferred till after to-morrow. They did not know that it meant more this time than mere delay; and this was explained not many hours later.

She returned home next morning, leaving the affair in her brother's hands, and promising to send the agent, with one or two witnesses for Hossein, the poor peasant; but hardly had she entered the farm premises when a group of women, who had apparently been awaiting her, approached, and began to speak one after the other—eager to tell bad news, as persons of that class invariably are.

"Oh, dear Sitt, only listen: poor Hossein! the cruel wretches! God and the prophet punish them! Oh, the sons of dogs, my brother, my brother!"

"My son, my dear son! child of my heart! oh that I live to see this black day!"

The last speaker was an aged creature, whose wrinkled face and bleared eyes and tattered garments made her a deplorable object; but whose evident grief and affection must touch the hardest heart, as she sobbed and wrung her toil-worn hands, in the anguish of a mother whose child is in suffering! One, who was weeping so hysterically that for some minutes she could not articulate, now clung to Mrs. Hillyard's arm, who well knew she was the wife.

"Do tell me what it is, and do not all scream at once, my poor dear women!" she exclaimed compassionately, patting the shoulders of the weeping wife in Eastern fashion.

"They have tortured him!" burst from the lips of the heart-broken sister, who stood on the other side—"our Hossein, the father of six little ones, the best

man in all the village ;" and she began, alas! to curse, as none, perhaps, but an Arab can ; poor thing, she knew no better !

"But what, on mere suspicion, without any proof at all? Oh ! this is too dreadful. God, have pity !" cried Irene, her own tears falling; but with a strong effort, she recovered her composure, and, raising her voice, begged for silence. Her agent, Girgas, was approaching as fast as the crowd of women would allow him, and would tell her more clearly. They stopped for the moment, and some began, with the instinct of habit, to draw their dark muslin veils across the lower part of the face, at a man's appearance, holding it with one hand, or even with the teeth, for the poor country women rarely have the regular face-veil, supported by its brass tube, like those in towns. The wife, mother, and sister, however, were quite unconscious of anything but their own grief, and continued sobbing and muttering curses and lamentations alternately, while the agent told his lady the sad case. He supposed that either there was some private spite or that the relatives of the murdered man were making a great demonstration, and threatened to get the local authorities into trouble, if some one were not at once apprehended.

"But every one knows the murderer was a negro," said Irene.

"Yes, the witnesses both agree in that; one said the negro sprung from behind a tree, and then fled,

but the other was close, and actually saw him strike down the poor victim. There is no doubt of it having been a black; but they try to make out that because Hossein was absent from his home at that hour, he and one from another place must have been accomplices."

"And upon such a miserable rag of suspicion as that, do you mean, they put this poor man to the torture?"

"Yes, Sitt, I grieve to say it is too true; they want him to tell the murderer's name, which, of course, he cannot do any more than you can, and he has been beaten on the feet, so that he will be lame for weeks, if he does not die in prison; so his wife and children must starve!"

"No, we can prevent that," said his mistress, "if I had to divide my last loaf with them; but this torture, oh, Girgas, cannot Mr. Hillyard do any thing? he knows so many people."

"I will ride in this afternoon, Sitt, if you wish, and see your honour's brother. Now, all you women, do go to your homes," added the man, not roughly, however, for he was a kind-hearted fellow; "my lady is tired—think what a ride she has had. You, Zeynab, don't stand gaping there like a fool" (turning to the youthful handmaiden, who, like most of the bystanders, was a distant relative of the victim); "go, child, at once, and get some coffee for the Sitt; and you, my sisters" (to the women), "God pity and help you all! Go home now."

"Stop a minute, Girgas; is the barn empty?" said his lady.

"Yes, all the corn is sold; it is clear now."

"Well, come in here a moment;" and she entered the rude apartment in the court which was used to store grain, &c., in due season, and closed with a solid door and lock, which Girgas opened with a key in his pocket. Mrs. Hillyard beckoned the women to follow her, and said, "We will ask our God to help us, before we ask the help of man;" and she immediately knelt down on the chaff-covered floor. Several did the same; some, however, stood, having been told it was wrong to kneel when a Christian prayed. But all listened attentively as their friend poured out an earnest and touching supplication in their native tongue, pleading with the Almighty His own promise to have compassion on the poor and needy, and to look down on the afflicted. Several gave a hearty "Amen" as she concluded, and thanked her for her words of kindness, as she bade them farewell for the present, and went to rest in her own room.

"If any one can help you, it is our Sitt," said one, taking the arm of the poor mother, who was tottering with weakness and sorrow coming upon her advanced age; "she is a believer in God, though she is a Christian, and I am sure He hears her prayers, for she loves the poor."

"By the prophet! no *Moslem* could be kinder or better," said another.

"And who is it that is so cruel to our poor Hossein; is it not a Moslem? The devil has his own to be found everywhere; surely these are the children of darkness!"

"Ay," observed Girgas, as the sad group passed him in the yard, "ay, how often has my Sitt read to you, out of God's book, 'By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?'"

"Ah, true words! true words! Mr. Girgas. I can understand them *now*," said one of the women.

"If these men were God's servants," he continued, "would they be so wicked and unjust, and so cruel in their dealings?"

"No, no; they are infidels, *demons!*" cried the poor wife.

"And my Sitt; are her words and her actions not good? Is not she a servant of God?"

"Truth is with you, Mr. Girgas; she is sugar and honey," they replied, using a favourite Egyptian expression of praise, as they trooped off, murmuring, "Mashallah; God bless our lady, and have pity on poor Hossein!"

CHAPTER XI.

JUSTICE BY FAVOUR.

SEVERAL letters were written by Edmund Hillyard about the affair of the peasant Hossein, but no results followed; then he was summoned on business to Alexandria, and told his sister she had better call on a certain Pasha who was over that department of Government and try if she could induce him to do something for the release of the man. A friend who was known to this Pasha would accompany her, as a lady could not well go to the office of a great man by herself.

Accordingly Irene sent the wife of the poor captive to take him some necessaries the morning on which she arranged to call with Abdallah Bey (the friend), and desired that she should wait at her brother's house on her return from prison to hear what would be the effect of the visit on her husband's fate.

At nine o'clock they drove into the court where was the office, and sent in their names, but a considerable time was taken up in messages and questions and long salutations and compliments between Abdallah Bey and the doorkeeper and the aga.

Then when they were admitted another delay followed, while the black man told the secretary's assistant, and he told his superior, who went to tell the Pasha, that if it pleased him the Frank lady and the Egyptian gentleman were waiting to have the honour of a few words; for there is red tape in the East as well as in the West, though the tying may be differently arranged. At last the great man was visible, a stout elderly person, with strongly Turkish physiognomy, and wearing a Parisian made coat and boots, &c., so that he looked as unoriental in his exterior as he was a thorough Turk within.

He did not ask them to be seated; the long habit of looking on women as inferior creatures had not been softened by a residence in Europe, as is the case with some. He did not intend to be rude, but it never occurred to him that it *was* rude to let a lady stand while he was sitting on a divan. As to the *man*, he knew the fellow of old; he had been his own brother's secretary formerly, and though he had risen since that, there was no need of any great deference to him! However, Irene did not in the least trouble herself; and after polite salutations and thanks for the honour of an audience, she begged her friend to explain the matter, which he did as briefly as he could. Then she ventured to add a few words, urging the cause of justice.

"But what is it to you? you are a Frank!" said the Pasha.

"Oh that is nothing, your excellency; one must feel for the poor of the land one resides in, and I am a child of the country almost, having been here long."

"True, you speak Arabic wonderfully well for a stranger; you really *are* a daughter of the land;" and he smiled quite in a friendly manner. But he was no Egyptian himself, and did not care much about the children of the soil.

This is far from being the case with all Turks; some have resided so long, or even been born in Egypt, that they have attached themselves to the country, and feel it their own; but many, on the contrary, only like it as a source of wealth, and despise the people, and never talk Arabic except among those who have no knowledge of Turkish, keeping as much aloof as possible from natives. This Pasha was, unluckily for Irene, and yet more for poor Hossein, of the latter and not the former class of Turks; he was, therefore, much harder to influence in the cause of an obscure peasant.

"This man is really much injured," said she, after a brief pause; "he is quite innocent, and has been tortured for nothing!"

"No, lady," replied the Pasha, "we do not manage things in such a way, I assure you; you are doubtless misinformed;" and he looked rather suspiciously at her.

"Is no one ever beaten on the feet through the

cruelty and injustice of underlings, who want to punish some one, and do not know the right criminal, or even who receive bribes to spare the right and punish the wrong man?"

"It is possible such things may have happened, but they are not allowed now; we are just, and look carefully to business, and bribes, lady, let me tell you, are forbidden."

"Of course, but they are nevertheless often taken," Irene said; but she stopped short, for she saw Abdallah Bey's eyebrows raised with a significant look. She knew her own foible of hasty speech, and checked herself at once, the more readily that she observed the Pasha's face looking more cold and stern than before.

Her friend came to the rescue promptly, however, with some complimentary remarks, which she thought would have choked her, had she attempted them. He then went on to say the poor man, he fully believed, would be proved innocent in time, only he was now suffering sadly, and the lady being kind-hearted—and so on.

The way thus opened again, Irene returned to the charge, and this time leaving justice alone, merely pleaded mercy, and spoke of the poverty of the family, &c., till the Pasha relented a little, and said, "I will have the matter spoken about; but it must rest with the Judge of the Court where such cases are tried, not with me."

Beckoning to a secretary, who was writing seated on a sofa at the window, a book on his knee, a paper in his hand, and an inkhorn in his belt, he said, "Yousif, note down the name and residence of this peasant."

Abdallah instantly produced a paper with these written on it, and handed it to the secretary.

"Let Alee Bey," continued the Pasha, "be told to inquire carefully into the case. This is all I can do;" and he made a polite, though cold salutation; and Irene saw they were dismissed.

As they went down the stairs, she asked her companion, in a voice he alone could hear, if it were strictly true that the Pasha could do nothing?

"On the contrary," he replied coolly; "it is not true at all; a word from him would open the prison door at once."

"Could we not try to see his mother? I mean *I* might perhaps get access to her; I know he has a mother, and such are usually powerful."

"It is your last chance, Sitt Irene," replied Abdallah Bey. "We must drive to your brother's, and afterwards to the residence of the Pasha; this is only his office. Do you bring some money as a bribe to the chief aga, or we shall not have a hope of admittance, but as the matter is what they will consider a small one, three or four pounds may be enough."

It was a good deal for a woman whose income was, though sufficient to allow of much charity, by no means very large, and generally portioned out before-

hand; but she did not hesitate, it was only going without a new silk dress a few months longer.

"You might also bring the wife with you," continued the Bey; "she can throw herself at the feet of the great lady, and kiss them, and weep, and thus help the cause."

"I hope then she is unlike her son in having a heart," said Irene. "Such a haughty, arrogant, disagreeable man! How much pleasanter the lower class of people are to deal with! It seems to me the shopkeeper of the smallest shop in this street, for instance, is more of a gentleman in manner, than this wealthy, proud man."

"He is not a man of much education," said her friend; "there are many, like him, who have been raised because they or their fathers were useful to some one in power, and who are not distinguished by learning, much less by benevolence, and of course are particularly apt to be haughty. It is, however, more than anything else, the hareem life that spoils men; before they are grown up they are ruined by that system. There are, however, some noble exceptions, as Mr. Hillyard knows, some Turks who, born in Egypt, love the country, and desire the good of the people, and who have greatly modified that hareem life, so far as to have only one wife, and to have their children educated. If instead of exceptions, these men were numerous, Egypt would make rapid advances; but, alas, they are few!"

Abdallah Bey was himself a man of great intelligence, and well educated, for an Egyptian; he was a Copt, or native Christian, and had been, as are many of his co-religionists, brought up to the business of a scribe. He had begun life as private secretary to a Pasha, had then entered government employ, and by diligence and more acquirements than most of his class, had risen considerably, been made a Bey, and had a large income. He knew from his early experiences all the inns and outs of Eastern law and politics, and was able to speak Turkish, and had some knowledge of both English and French. A better person to assist in such a case could not be found, provided he was kind-hearted enough to take a real interest in it, which he was, besides being a pious man as far as his light went.

"You see, Sitt Irene," he continued, "if all were like our Minister of Education, for instance, there would be a wonderful change in Egypt in ten years; but the bigoted and ignorant are the majority, and I fear their power is greater than Europeans are aware."

"Do you fear any disturbance that you say this?" she asked.

"At present, no! But should by any chance one of that set get into power, and make himself popular, there would be great danger of revolutionary troubles. However, you and I can do nothing, so let us attend to our little affair. Here we are at your house."

Fortunately the Pasha's abode was quite near Mr. Hillyard's, so they soon reached it, accompanied by the wife of Hossein, who was named *Mokatefy*, wrapped up in her simple dark blue mantle, with its pretty striped border of deep indigo and white.

The carriage waited in the court of the house, which was built round three sides of a large enclosure according to the style of all old Egyptian houses. Abdallah Bey went in to find the black functionary and *entreat* him to accept the gift, which was, in fact, a donation from a much less rich person than himself.

The fat, bloated, conceited-looking person in his black French coat and scarlet tarboush appeared duly, and saluted the Bey, whom he knew by sight. He hesitated a good while, not from delicacy, but from a doubt whether those few pieces of gold were enough to make it worth troubling himself for them. However, he reflected that money was always a good thing, and two words with his lady were no heavy labour, so he gave a grin of condescending graciousness, and said, "We will see!" closing his fingers over the gold as he spoke, and retired behind the hareem curtain that hung over the forbidden entrance.

Another waiting, of course, during which Irene, sitting in an open carriage in a broiling sun, felt nearly done brown, in spite of a large white umbrella. At last they were summoned, and the gentleman had to take his turn of waiting, as it is hardly needful to say

he would not be admitted behind the curtain ; but he did not wait in the sun. The salamlik was prepared for gentlemen visitors expressly, and he was left to repose there and pass the time with his favourite cigarettes, while the lady and her peasant companion were ushered into an anteroom with plenty of divans all round the walls, but no other furniture, and no one to meet them. The peasant seated herself on the floor near the door, and patiently waited her fate (Egypt is a fine place for practising patience). Poor Irene chafed meanwhile like a horse in a tight curb, as the minutes went by, and no one appeared. However, she gave no outward sign of impatience but by the flashing of her bright eye and an occasional hard breath ; for she dared not betray herself to the slaves who were to be seen passing so near the curtained doors of the antechamber that she knew they were all within earshot.

Perhaps some English reader may fancy that the dignified matron who at length came on the scene (a very fat personage, clad in delicate lemon coloured silk gauze), made the graceful apologies usual with English ladies if their guests have been kept upwards of half an hour waiting, and said, " Excuse my delay, and so forth ; " not at all. Sitt Tafeda thought she honoured a Frank woman quite enough in consenting to receive her, and though her greeting was ceremoniously polite it was not cordial, far less apologetic.

" Be seated," she said gravely, after the compliments

were over and the poor woman had knelt and kissed the hem of her robe, and then crouched up in the corner again.

Irene then begged to be pardoned for her intrusion, thanked the great lady for receiving her, and with much tact narrated the poor man's case, resting mainly on his numerous family and his poverty. His innocence, she said very briefly, would, she felt sure, be proved, as he was absent from the scene of the murder at the time specified, and had no connection with any negroes, and a negro had been proved to be the criminal; but knowing she would be looked on as a partizan, and her word go for little therefore, on that subject, she kept principally to the distress of the family, and then beckoned to the wife, who had risen and was only awaiting her signal to rush to her aid. Darting forward she flung herself at the lady's feet, which she kissed, sobbing, weeping, and pleading all at once. "Her poor Hossein, the best man in the whole district! his state was fearful, his feet swelled and black as *that* (holding up the end of the rusty black silk kerchief that bound her head), his six young children starving, the last a pair of twin girls, and the one before them a deaf and dumb boy—such a charge for a poor woman. By the head of thy father and by the Pasha's head, lady, pity the worse than orphans, and free their father. Have mercy for the All Merciful's sake; see our tears!" And so she went on with a torrent of language, waxing poetical in her

imagery and fluent as the most fluent orator in Parliament. Would that many a dull preacher or 'stickit minister' would be as unhesitating in language and as racy in matter as was this poor creature! But she was what they are not always (alas for themselves and their hearers!), most thoroughly in earnest, and wished with all her heart and soul for what she was pleading about. The rather cold Turkish woman, spoiled by a lazy, luxurious, selfish life, and accustomed only to think of her own surroundings, was not unkindly if she got a chance of hearing the truth, and having the sorrows of others brought before her. She was touched. Irene's spontaneous kindness in taking so much trouble for a poor peasant, knocked a little at the door of her heart, and the passionate pleadings of the wife fairly opened it. Clapping her hands, she told the slave to send the aga to her directly; that portly individual was in waiting, and his important sanction having been before given by the fact of his admitting the petitioners, she did not discuss the matter, but merely spoke a few words in Turkish, which meant that he was to request her son, the Pasha, to liberate the peasant on account of his large family, as soon as possible.

Fresh protestations and prayers, fresh invocations of the prophet, and blessings and thanks to the noble lady, who made their sun to shine again, from poor Mokatefy, and warm thanks from Irene, while with a really pleasant and courteous smile (for mercy is sweet

to the giver), she signed to her to take up the prostrate female. Coffee was brought at this moment, and the poor woman was made to share, seated on the ground, near the door, as at first; and after this they took leave, and rejoined Abdallah Bey.

He advised Irene to wait yet a little longer, as the order to the judge would probably be given at once now. Nor was he mistaken; in five minutes the secretary handed a small paper with a few words, *signed.*

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRISON.

"IF you are not too tired, we will drive to the prison. We pass the office of the Judge on our way, and in the evening he goes to his house, and she would have to wait till to-morrow."

"Is it then an order for immediate release?" said Irene; "I cannot read that involved writing well."

"Yes, yes," said the Bey smiling; "it only wanted two words, as I told you. But it is very hot, and you will be tired.

"I? And that poor fellow in the prison. Is *he* not more tired still? No; let us go on at once, if you are kind enough to spare me the time.

"I am at leisure to-day, fortunately, and it is true the prisons here are not agreeable abodes to linger in a moment beyond what is inevitable.

They drove on through the narrow streets, many of them shaded by mats supported by poles from roof to roof; but the air was like fire, as is apt to be the case in the end of June at noonday.

The carriage at length stopped at the court where Irene had been with her brother on the first unsuc-

cessful attempt. Abdallah Bey threaded the way for himself and his companions through the busy crowds; for being the hour at which most of the officials eat, the people who came on their own business were not now the only ones who were coming and going among the crimson-robed official attendants, lads in blue tunics more or less ragged, bearing trays of hard eggs, olives, cheese, bread, and hot boiled sheeps'-heads, with some other favourite edibles, were jostling little girls with water jars, and, rather to Irene's surprise, these all made their way up to the scribes seated at work in the inner rooms, many of whom purchased their refreshments and paused by turns in their writing to eat without leaving the divans on which they sat. The judge they were in search of, a large, dignified-looking man, in an immense white turban and a flowing *gibbeh* (a loose long robe with sleeves, worn over the caftan) of fine pistachio green cloth, was occupied with a plate of sheep's-head, which the seller had first cut up for him, so as to be easily taken with the fingers ; and they had to wait a few minutes, as it is thought very uncivil in the East to interrupt any one who is eating. But his meal was not long, luckily for their patience. He beckoned a boy to pour water over his hands, an Ibreek and tisht or basin and ewer of metal, being handy for the purpose ; and then Abdallah stepped up and handed him the paper, with a brief explanation and a courteous gesture of salutation.

He read it slowly, examined the signature suspiciously, then stroked his beard, and finally nodded, "Right!" then motioned to a scribe near him to write two other papers which it seemed were necessary, gave them to Abdallah Bey, who read them both, and seeing all was according to law, which he well understood, bowed and saluted again, as did his two companions; and they took their departure, and drove off again, this time to the prison itself. The Bey had provided Irene with a paper of admission to this, as she had told him she wished to see it, and with a large basket of bread. They were admitted without much difficulty, having the great man's paper, and found themselves in a large court somewhat like those of some of the palaces or good houses in size, but gloomy and dismal in its adjuncts. Soldiers walked up and down with measured tread; the walls were dingy and discoloured, and on two sides grated openings appeared instead of windows, at each of which a crowd of miserable, dirty, ragged beings, thrusting their naked arms through the bars and imploring "A morsel of bread, in the name of God and the Prophet!" as soon as they beheld the strangers enter the court. All were apparently crowded in one or two large rooms, and as far as could be seen through the bars the place was dirty and neglected in the extreme.

The prisoners' friends are supposed to supply them with food; and though such as are destitute, or whose wives, reduced often by the absence of the bread-

winner to great misery, cannot bring them food, are entitled to a daily ration from the prison, it is only a piece of dry bread, and who can say that even that miserable portion is given them fairly, and that the turnkey does not withhold it, or a stronger prisoner snatch it and leave the weaker one to starve? Certain it is that the wretched condition of the prison was enough to make Irene shudder, as she saw the claw-like hands of some famished creatures thrust through the bars, clutching at the bread which the soldiers threw in pieces from her basket, and tearing the morsels one from another, devoured them with frenzied eagerness. She thought of the judge and his sheep's-head luncheon, and wished she had a whole sheep to give these poor wretches. The scene was most painful; they fought and snatched and beat one another like fierce animals, till one of the guards threatened them with his bayonet-point and a few equally pointed words. The bread being now exhausted, they quieted down somewhat, and she was able to turn round and see what Abdallah Bey was doing with the papers. Two officials were talking to him and reading, or rather listening, to them, and presently the one who seemed the chief gave an order, and the guard in charge went round to a small door and reappeared with the unfortunate Hossein limping feebly after him on his injured feet, which were bound with old rags.

How different he looked, with his pale, sallow,

haggard face, soiled garments and halting gait, from the sturdy peasant, with his upright carriage and bronzed healthy face, who had entered that court some weeks ago! What would it have been after a year? much longer, one could scarcely expect to find the man alive at all.

Irene left the husband and wife, as soon as they were outside the precincts of the prison, to return to their village, giving them a small sum to hire a couple of donkeys, as it was of course impossible for poor Hossein to walk any distance, and she then drove to her brother's to rest for the remainder of the day, after taking a grateful leave of the kindly Abdallah Bey.

"One has to recollect what our own prisons were before Howard's and Mrs. Fry's exertions," she remarked to her sister-in-law, as they sat over their refreshing cups of tea that evening.

"Yes," replied Esther; "Egypt is not in the nineteenth century, in fact, but far behind; still it is a pity an Oriental Howard does not appear."

"There are benevolent men, and well-meaning ones, among the higher and more educated Egyptians," said Irene, "but they are a very small minority, I fear; and as to enterprising patriotic men, devoted to the poor, and indifferent to wealth and advancement, where are they, I wonder?"

"Do you know," said Esther, "the people seem to me more cheerful, with all their troubles and the frequent injustice they have to bear than our

poor folk in England. How is it? Can it be only sunshine?"

"Sun helps, I do believe," said Irene, "to make people cheerful, natives of the country, I mean, but it is not only that; people may be below resenting injustice, as well as above it. A man who has a little education always chafes under a wrong, and if he is energetic tries to rouse others also, and unluckily too often in the wrong and not the right way. The grand difficulty in this country is the want of honest trustworthy agents in almost every line; and of course, when you have not these over prisons, they must be full of petty cruelties and injustices, even were the regulations better. Even in our own, there is a sad want of inferior officials who are fit to be trusted with so much power over their fellow-creatures, and in some respects, Esther, don't be shocked, if I say I think they have power to do almost worse than Egyptian turnkeys."

"How can that be, when our laws enforce a sufficiency of food, and some degree of comfort and cleanliness, while they are herded together like wild beasts?"

"That is worse, of course, in many ways; but the watching and spying, and the solitude of some of our prisons (for they are, curiously enough, or were very lately, quite different in different cities) are, I should conceive, even more *galling*, if not tempered by humanity and discretion, than utter neglect, at least it must depend more on the officials. Recollect that

solitude is allowed, by those who have tried it themselves, to drive people mad more than the odious company of bad fellow-creatures, hard as it seems to believe it for us who have not experienced either. However, our country is a reforming one, and though the salt be far too little, we *have* salt, and no evil will long be left without a champion."

"After all, sister, it must be a struggle between good and evil all the time," said Esther; "the only thing one can hope for is, that there should be a constant effort for right, and plenty of honest champions of truth and mercy. If England, with all her advantages and knowledge, has so many crying evils, we cannot be surprised to find them under the crescent."

"Ah, that is true, Esther; we ought to be a full moon, and we are not! But the day will come when all the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; but that will be when our King comes again; the 'outcasts in the land of Egypt' will not be forgotten then."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEY AT HOME.

NEARLY a year had passed since the events related in our last.

Zohrab Bey had returned, after an absence of six months, which was a shorter time than had been expected. The sudden death of the minister, who was his enemy's special friend, brought another man into power, who was not only well disposed to him, but connected with his brother-in-law, who was his particular companion. This news had hurried the Bey back to his home; he had passed great part of his stay with Mrs. Hillyard's family, for whom he formed a strong friendship, and partly in a tour to Scotland. He then visited Switzerland, and was about to go on to Italy, when the letters he received showed that he might return in safety. He lost no time in travelling back, to the delight, as may be supposed, of his young wife.

For the first few weeks after his return, Ain el Hayat seemed to be in Paradise; nor was the Bey less happy in her society, the more so as she was so improved in mind that he was always being surprised and pleased

at the remarks she made, and the intelligent questions she asked about his travels.

He had brought her photographs and various curiosities; but nothing pleased her more than a keepsake from Irene's sister Clara; a velvet cover for her New Testament, with an Arabic inscription upon it from the Psalms, "With thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light we shall see light."

"My dear one," said Zohrab, "thou knowest something now of those words and their meaning; the lady said, thy name, being the fountain of life, would keep them in thy mind. She made one similar to it for me, but small."

"Thy words are a little tarnished," she said, "with a smile that showed she knew why."

"Yes, my little wife has guessed it. I carry this book often in my pocket, for now I read much in it; it is a New Testament, and not so heavy. I have the whole Bible, as you know, in two or three editions."

They understood each other perfectly; both had made progress in the knowledge of the truth; they had begun to have their eyes opened; but neither would say how great the change was. With Ain el Hayat, indeed, she did not know herself how deep-rooted was now her belief in a Saviour. It had been so gradual and gentle, and her life so monotonous and quiet, that she hardly thought of looking back mentally to her own state formerly.

With the Bey it was different; he had been among

Christians as well educated and devoted as Irene Hillyard, but of various dispositions and ways of thinking; he had discussed and argued with his own sex. His English friends had dealt wisely and faithfully with the stranger, who came to sojourn among them for a time. They had introduced him to educated and pious men, not to clever infidels, knowing he was, though, anything but weak in character, yet a mere child in knowledge of the truth; and though in general society occasionally he might come across such, the intimates of the family were Christians; and the old and experienced lady who was head of the house did her best to bring *judicious* Christians to meet her Egyptian friend. Zohrab Bey was thoughtful by nature, and the conversations he had in England were gone over again in his mind while travelling; but except on the occasion of his giving the book cover to his wife, he did not repeat anything to her of what he had talked about. He read to her daily, and now and then made a remark; but his tongue seemed tied for some reason or other. He was soon a good deal occupied with a place under the Government, procured for him by his brother-in-law. The days passed into weeks, and weeks into months, and by degrees, almost imperceptible at first, a change began to be seen in Zohrab. His wife naturally perceived it first. He was as affectionate as ever, but became less cheerful and more silent daily; then he took to being alone in the evenings, and would tell her

he wished to write, and could not be disturbed, though what he was writing he never mentioned. Ain el Hayat was too humble a wife to think of asking what her husband wrote; but formerly she knew he would have told her, if but a little note of business, without being asked. Vague thoughts flitted through her mind, but she tried to drive them away, and to be as pleasant and lively as she could; for might it not be merely that he felt languid from the heat or some such trifle? It was now more than a year since his departure, as has been said, and the summer had given place to the autumn. The season had been particularly hot before the inundation, and many who were not actually ill, felt weary. Then his mother began to notice the change, and said her son's spirits were flagging, though he did not look ill, and that he must have had *an eye* light on him. He laughed when she said it, and for a few days was better; but the gloom and restlessness came back, and Sitt Fatmeh put her own construction upon the matter.

Irene Hillyard had seen the family on the Bey's return, and sympathised in their joy, but shortly afterwards had been at Alexandria to see an invalid friend, and stayed some time; then one of her brother's children was ill, and came to recover at the farm, and after that, one thing after another seemed always to arise to hinder her seeing her young friend as often as she wished; and when she did come

Zohrab Bey was rarely at home; if she saw him it was only for a minute. She began to think he avoided her, and that it could not be chance, for in former days he had enjoyed holding discussions with her. She felt sorely disappointed. On his first return home she had been greeted so cordially, and the Bey had thanked her so warmly for introducing him to her family, and spoke of her stepmother and brother, and Clara, the single sister, with so much regard and gratitude, and had even added that they had often read and conversed with him and other friends about the captive, that her hopes had been high, and now he seemed drawing back from the subject altogether, and from their pleasant friendly intercourse. It was true, he still allowed her full freedom in reading with his wife when she called, and she must be thankful for that, but she felt puzzled. They had now reached the middle of September, and the cooler breezes of evening and the pleasant dewy mornings had set in, and the Egyptian second spring begun. The roses were putting forth fresh buds, the fields began to assume a green hue wherever the waters of the inundation were subsiding. In others the sower was still busy going forth to cast his bread upon the waters. Irene stood on a raised path one day, watching the labourers at their work. How pretty the scene was! the palm grove with its feathery foliage glistening in the morning sun, and the clusters of dates hanging in rich profusion, looking like some

wondrous jewels of the "Arabian Nights," some of a coral red, others of a yellow so bright that when the sun's rays touched them they seemed of the purest gold.

The cheerful fellah was following his buffaloes along the pathway, or with his bag of corn scattering seed on the fields, springing lightly from one clod to another to avoid sinking in the soft mud, and sometimes obliged to stand on the higher ground and fling it as far as his arm could throw, where the earth was still under water.

Irene stood gazing a long time, and at last repeated the text aloud, which had come naturally into her mind: "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." "Yes, yes! that's it; I have the key I do believe! I see why Zohrab Bey is so depressed; he has received the good seed, but there is a struggle before it puts forth the shoot. The seed is there, it shall be found after many days; but it is still underground, and oh, the enemy of souls will try to destroy it. That seed was not dropped on the highway, I am sure. It won't be snatched by the fowls; but there are insidious worms even in the good ground; only we have the promise if it be really good ground it will bring forth one day abundantly. I long to speak, but one may do harm by pulling up a plant to see if it is growing well; I must pray and wait."

She turned back, for it was breakfast time, and her

early morning walk must end. At the door of the farm she saw Eurydice (as the former slave was now called) sitting on the threshold, with a little boy standing before her, whose bruised arm she was carefully bandaging with some of her healing decoctions, and as she approached Irene could hear her low voice speaking to the little fellow.

"Now, my little son, your arm is nearly finished, is it better? Well, repeat the words I taught you; don't be afraid, say them nicely."

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, who healeth all thy diseases, who forgiveth all thy iniquities."

"That is right, little son!" She then gave him a kiss and sent him away.

What a change from the hopeless, weary woman was this nursing sister, as Irene called her! She rose, and, greeting her with an affectionate, smiling salutation, went with her into the parlour, where the little servant had laid the meal; not the young Zeynab, alas, she was married! Just as she was beginning to be useful to herself and others, her parents insisted on finding a husband for her, saying twelve was a good age to be married, nor could all Irene's representations prevent their carrying off the poor child and establishing her in the hut of an old mother-in-law, who made her a complete drudge. As usual, when once the celebration is over and the jewels hired or borrowed for the occasion restored to their owners, a very prosaic life for the little bride sets in, and she is a hewer of

wood and drawer of water to her husband's mother till her early years are past, and she gradually assumes more power. Still, the good of the training, though far less than the mistress would have wished, was not all wasted; there was a certain degree of development, because the mind and heart, as well as the body, had been thought of. If we neglect this with ignorant native girls, their bit of civilization drops off when the clothes they brought from their situation are worn out.

But young Zeynab could say the Lord's prayer, and understood it too, and knew some scripture stories; and though not a converted girl, was, at least, an awakened one, and Irene felt hopeful about her. The next sister, Khaira, was her present maiden, and, under the efficient superintendence of Eurydice, who was more constantly at home than herself, had improved much more rapidly. The cousins always ate together morning and evening; at mid-day, Eurydice, who was used for so many years to the irregular habits of the peasants, did not care to sit down to a meal, but preferred to take some bread and cheese and olives or a few eggs when she happened to be hungry; and Irene let her do as she liked and *feel* free. She was repaid for her kindness by steadily-increasing affection, and, as she told her sister-in-law, it was a special mercy in the case of her little niece, for the child needed great care, and Irene had a severe cold at the time. Eurydice nursed both and managed

the house in a way only a really capable woman could, and was, as she said, "no end of comfort;" "and she is a real believer too," added Irene on that occasion; "she often tells me she has peace like a river *now*."

On this morning there happened to be a village accident case to attend to; and with a labourer as an escort, the Greek set out with her herbs and other matters. It was a painful, but not a dangerous affair, and quite within a nurse's compass. Irene, meanwhile, sat down to some writing. She had been occupied till nearly noon, when clapping of hands told that some visitor stood without, that being the usual summons in the country, where doors are generally open by day, and, if shut, have no knockers.

"Come in," she called; "who is there, and what do you want?"

A Nubian lad whom she recognised as a favourite attendant of Zohrab Bey then entered, and with a respectful salute, handed her a note. It was from the secretary, to request her to come over to the city as early as was convenient. She glanced at the lad, whose face betrayed agitation.

"I will come directly; but tell me, Mahmoud, is the Bey ill or the lady?"

"The lady. She is not very ill, but not quite well, and the Bey told me to come; she wants you directly."

Irene tried to learn more, but all her questions only extracted the information that the Bey had been

summoned by his brother-in-law for some business early that morning, and that before he went out he had desired the Nubian lad to take a donkey and ride to the English lady with that message, as he understood the Sitt Ain el Hayat was not well, and thought if the English lady would be so kind as to come and stay a little with her it would be very kind, and he ordered the carriage to drive as far as where the path that was only fit for riding met the high road, in order to save her the fatigue and time which she would have if she rode all the way.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MYSTERY.

IT was still early in the afternoon when Irene arrived at the town residence of Zohrab Bey. Every thing appeared as usual; there was nò air of fright or anxiety among the slaves whom she met as she went upstairs; but they were only the negresses, the five white ones did not appear.

Sitt Fatmeh was at the curtain-door, apparently going towards the little room, where her son wrote and kept his papers. She paused on seeing the visitor, whom she did not expect, evidently, and her greeting was not very cordial; but she looked rather pre-occupied than suspicious or inimical.

After saluting her, Irene went towards the apartment of Ain el Hayat. She saw a white slave on the watch for her, and was at once conducted to the room where the fair Circassian was lying on the divan as pale as death, and her long hair hanging dishevelled on the cushions, while her dress showed less care than usual, the muslin being crumpled, and looking as if she had slept in it (which was the case, indeed).

"What is it, my sister, my friend? tell me?" said Irene, kneeling by the sofa and taking her hand.

She raised her head sobbing hysterically, and vainly trying to speak for some minutes; at last she ejaculated, "Nothing, nothing, I am only tired!"

However, her visitor saw her glance at the slaves, several of whom were hanging about her, while the old black nurse was vigorously rubbing her feet, which in the East, is supposed to be a comfort, if not a remedy for every malady.

Irene had fortunately brought her smelling salts, and these assisted the poor young creature to rally her strength a little and sit up. She begged the slaves to leave her with the English lady, saying that she wanted to be alone with her. They rather reluctantly withdrew, one after another, except the nurse, who would have been much offended if *she* were supposed to be included in the banishment. But her mistress did not, even in her trouble, lose her natural tact and gentleness; and she made an excuse to send the old dame away, telling her she wished to try some drink which would take some time to prepare, and that she might bring it in half an hour. As soon as the room was clear, she rose and led her friend into the dressing-room, which had a door and lock, and having shut and locked it, sat down with her on the sofa.

"Now we can speak," said she; but it was some moments before she could get out another word, and

Irene had to make her drink cold water and bathe her forehead before she could gain composure.

"Dear sister, how kind you are! I am now better, and it will be a relief to tell you all my sorrow, though I fear you cannot help me, but you will ask God to do so. He alone can help."

"In any case I will pray for you, but I can better plead for something which I know than when in the dark."

"You shall hear. But first answer me a question—have you observed any change lately in the Bey?"

"I see him but seldom," replied Irene, "but I am sure that he has some struggle going on in his mind from what I observe."

"There! I was certain you were sharp, and would detect it."

Irene was going on to tell her what she thought the struggle was between religious convictions and old habits, and the dread of a future full of trials if he should embrace Christianity; but Ain el Hayat gave her no time to get in a single word.

"Yes, I see now," she exclaimed, "why he has avoided talking and sitting with me as before. Evil be on the day on which my light became darkness!"

"Oh, my dearest Sitt, don't talk so; do be calm, for otherwise they will hear outside, and we cannot talk. Tell me quietly all about what vexes you."

"You are right, my sister," said Ain el Hayat.

"Listen, and I will talk calmly, and tell you everything."

Like almost all Orientals, she gave, not the *result* of a conversation, but, as far as possible, every word of it.

"Yesterday my mother-in-law called me after supper to come into her room. 'Ain el Hayat,' said she, 'thou art a good daughter and a good wife; thou wilt not therefore be displeased, my child, at what I am going to say.' I trembled in myself, and thought 'on what evil can we have alighted to-day? for something bad will follow these words.' She continued, 'Thou hast doubtless noticed the gloom and dulness of the Bey thy lord lately; how he goes by himself; how if he is cheerful for a little time, he suddenly becomes as solemn as if an earthquake were going to take place; and this is increasing. Last week he sat up nearly all night in the writing-room. Hast thou not seen this? Every slave in the hareem says "the eye of evil has touched our dear lord surely." Can his wife, then, alone have observed nothing?' Finding she required an answer, I replied, 'Mother, I have also seen it. But God is great; let us hope the cloud will pass away.'

"'Tell me, my daughter, if thou knowest it, the reason of this cloud?' she continued.

"I replied, 'The secrets of the heart are with God.'"

Here Irene again attempted to interpose by suggesting her own view of the alteration in Zohrab Bey,

but so absorbed was poor Ain el Hayat in her own grief and its cause, that she became quite agitated at the interruption.

"I shall not be able to go on if I stop *once*," she said; "I recollect every word now, but if you do not let me go straight through the conversation, I shall get confused and begin to cry." She seized the water jar and hastily swallowed a few mouthfuls of water, and then went on with her somewhat prolix, but faithful, account of the evening's conversation.

"'True, daughter,' answered my mother-in-law, 'the secrets of the heart are indeed with God, but mothers are appointed by God, and they, more than any others in the world, know the causes of grief in their children; thou dost not know this, for thou hast never known a mother, nor art thou one thyself, unhappily. I know why my son is changed, and I perceive that thou art quite in ignorance.'

"'I have a right to know,' I said; 'but why did he hide from one who loves him more than life anything that weighs down his soul?'

"'I will tell thee, my daughter; he feared to vex thee, and doubtless has been trying to get courage to say what might bring tears to the eyes he loves. Listen, then: on your wedding day he promised to take no other wife.'

"'And he will keep his word,' I cried, unable longer to restrain myself; 'my lord is true and good, he will never deceive me!' But my heart grew cold and hard

with anguish, as she said the words, for I guessed what was coming.

"'His heart is white,' said Sitt Fatmeh, calmly; but he has been nearly four years married, and has no heir. Besides, there is another reason why he should wish to do as others do, and as our laws permit. His enemy, Ahmed Mohammed, is not dead; his power is for a time lessened, if not gone, as he has now few friends in the ministry. But he is cunning, and it behoves my son to be on his guard, and to make powerful friends if he can. One of the ministers is, as you know, friendly to our family, being connected with my daughter's husband. He likes Zohrab, and has lately introduced him to his brother, a man of influence and wealth, who has a marriageable daughter; she is, in fact, older than thou wert when Zohrab married thee; this brother of the minister's is called Mohammed Saleem. All the family are anxious to be in friendly relations with us, and have found means to let us know that they would like to give this girl to Zohrab. His being married is no sort of difficulty. Many have three or four wives, as we all know; and many have hundreds of slave wives besides those legally united by the Mollah. But this I do not like, it brings much expense and much trouble and vexation. I rejoice that my son is not of that disposition to wish for hundreds of wives; but a second is quite reasonable, especially when there are such good causes for his taking her: first, the security

to himself of making so valuable and powerful a connection; then the danger of affronting a man in power by slighting the offer he has indirectly made of bestowing on my son his brother's daughter; and, lastly, the fact that he has no heir, which is considered in this country reason enough alone.'

"I sat silent, with a dagger, as it seemed, sticking in my heart. Seeing I could not speak, she went on:

"'I have seen the dalala (female agent) who has been employed to speak to me about it; of course, such people are not to be depended on, they tell such lies; if a girl is humpbacked they describe her as a houri. But I sent, privately, a friend on whom I can rely, and one of our slaves; and the report is very favourable. The girl is not so handsome as thou art, pretty one, all the better for thee' (and she actually laughed), but is very well-looking, fair and plump, and with good features, and seems very good tempered, and lively also.'

"'Have you yet spoken to my lord?' I said, forcing myself to speak.

"'No,' she said, 'his friend has mentioned it, or his brother-in-law, I do not know which; one of them was to speak to him. I am going to see and speak on his return to-night. I wished to see you first, Ain el Hayat, that there may be no secrets among us, and that you may have time to get over the affair, and not make a fuss about it. I am certain Zohrab wishes to accept the offer; nay, that the cause of his low

spirits is that he wishes for another, but does not like to vex one he too loves truly. What, my daughter, art thou the only woman in Egypt? We have all the same thing to bear. The father of Zohrab had three wives, and when the second came I cried, certainly; I was the first, and, being a Pasha's daughter, and not a slave, felt proud and expected to be alone always; but my father was dead, I had no brothers, my lord could do as he chose. I got over it; and, after a while, he took a third; she is alive yet, but we are not on good terms, and do not visit therefore; but with the second I got on pretty well. There, now,' she continued, patting me on the shoulders, 'be at ease, and do not fret. God is great and merciful, and when one has carried a burden a little the back becomes accustomed to it. Mohammed Saleem is anxious his daughter should be well married and kindly treated, otherwise he might have found her a wealthier match. We are tolerably rich indeed, but not so much so as many others are; but he thinks his daughter will be happy in this connection because of Zohrab's good character. Who, indeed, would not be happy with such a husband?'

"I could not endure these words, and hiding my head in my veil, I wept the bitterest tears that ever flowed before, I think.

"'Come,' said my mother-in-law, 'do not be silly; my son, I am sure, wishes this, and only hesitated at first because he fears to leave you angry and unhappy.'

"I interrupted her: 'Sitt Fatmeh!' I exclaimed,

'why do you call your son a man of truth and honour, while you think he wishes to break his promise, given to me in your presence, as well as when we were alone together?'

"'My little foolish one!' she answered smiling, as if the affair were about the breaking of a glass cup, instead of the breaking of a loving wife's heart, 'dost thou not know,' our Koran says, "a man may without sin deceive his wife,'" in order to please her of course. Every one tells lies to a bride; a bride is young and timid; her bridegroom is naturally a total stranger, and he wishes to please and cheer the poor fluttering dove, and get her to peck from his hand. Ha, ha, ha! So the first few weeks he says anything to please her; but the law does not bind him to keep all those promises.'

"'I want only one, as he gave me only one promise,' said I, my face burning with anger I could not hide longer; 'and I do not believe he will break it, he fears God, and loves me.'"

"'My child,' she said, 'I never denied his love: God forbid! but the law of our land, and the customs of our fathers, ordered by the holy prophet Mohammed, all permit several wives to men; why should you be different from the rest? You are not a Christian?' and as she said the last words, she gazed at me with a questioning face, that rather frightened me; for Sitt Irene, I love the book of God now more than the tales they taught me.

"But I was frightened. I said secretly to God, 'Oh Lord the merciful, pity and help me!' then I said aloud, 'Sitt Fatmeh! the Christians are at least in this respect better than we are.'

"'Christians better than we! Oh, Ain el Hayat, art thou like the infidels, whom God will burn by-and-by?'

"'David the prophet says, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and the nations that forget God. I learned the words,' said I boldly; 'you believe David was a prophet, well! these are his words. He does not say, in all his Psalms, any word about God giving His blessing to those who deceive their wives and break their promises.'

"'David was a prophet, and so was Mohammed," my mother-in-law answered; 'and if one says it, it is quite enough. I like your English friend, daughter; she is kind to the poor, is good and sweet, and I hope God will not let her, for these reasons, be reckoned with the rest of the Christians, who eat pigs' flesh and drink spirits, and are a thousand times accursed. But her ways and belief are not ours. We are Islam, and must do as our fathers. Why, child, Abraham had more than one wife! is Zohrab to be wiser than the friend of God? Solomon had even hundreds; what can you say?'

"I said, for I will not repeat all" (looking at her watch), "the time is passing, that the old times were different, just as you had taught me, and as Zohrab

said himself many times to me. Besides he told me though God allowed many wives in those times, He did not praise or bless them for the custom ; on the contrary, trouble and sorrows came from it, and never any good. He made our father Adam one wife ; Noah had one, and also his sons ; and the Lord Jesus said that a man and his wife were *one*. He would be angry if we do not hear His word ; and we ought to go back to the first creation in this matter, and not carry on the mistakes of our fathers."

"Really, my dear sister," interrupted Irene, "you recollect wonderfully all we have talked of and read. But why, then, are you so unhappy, if Zohrab is so steady for the right? They can't marry him against his will!"

"Listen, beloved friend," said Ain el Hayat, "and you will see that if my well is not *quite* dry, there is hardly more than one drop of water in it!

"My mother-in-law reproached me a good deal with being too learned for a woman ; but then she added more kindly, 'I don't desire to make you sorry, daughter ; you have always pleased me and obeyed my wishes; nor do I wish Zohrab to care more for another than you. Always you will be his favourite' (at this word, Sitt Irene, I shuddered as if one had thrust my feet into hot ashes and burnt me. His *favourite! I*—my lord's true wife! I could have killed her for the odious word, but I restrained my

anger, and sat still). 'He is sad,' she went on, 'for want of an heir, and also he is not quite at ease about his enemy. To strengthen his connections a marriage with the daughter of the minister's brother is the best thing in the world, to say nothing of the fact that to *refuse* would most probably injure him much.

"'Now listen, daughter. This girl has, by chance, had a sight of Zohrab. It was wrong, of course; but God forgive her, it was just an accident, so the female agent informs me. She was at the window in the hareem, and he was standing in the garden talking with her father, and they lingered for some minutes. Her father's back was to the window, but Zohrab's face was that way, and from that moment she loved him. Her father had already proposed the match through a friend, but had not said a word to her or her mother; only the agent, of course, let it out as those old women *do*, you know.' I don't know what she said after this. I seemed to see a mist before my eyes, and almost fainted; but I struggled against it with all my might, and she called a slave to bring water and made me drink, and then left me. I lay on the divan for a long time and cried, and at last went into a sort of troubled sleep. Zohrab did not come to supper; he was with some friends, and I could not eat. I went to my room early, and heard him come home before midnight. His mother called to him and said, loud enough for me to hear (but she thought me asleep), 'Ain el Hayat has a head-ache,

and is gone early to bed, and had not better be disturbed. I have a word to say to thee, my son; come in here a moment.'

"It was a warm night, and I suppose he was not tired. I heard them go across the anteroom, and lay listening a long time. At last I lost consciousness, but it was only to dream that I saw a strange woman driving me out of the hareem, and I awoke with a scream. I have not seen my lord since."

There was a long silence; Irene was thinking. Presently she said, "I don't believe it; I am nearly sure that the Bey is only restless and gloomy because he knows that he ought to be a Christian, and cannot make up his mind to the risk and trials that might, nay must ensue!"

"A Christian? Impossible!" cried Ain el Hayat. "And yet," after a pause, "it is true he believes that the Lord Jesus is our Saviour, and that the Bible is the only true book. Still, I don't think he will dare to turn Christian; they would kill him."

"Well, I have told you my opinion, my dear, and I maintain it. I don't think he has any idea of another wife."

"Oh, but my sister, my dear friend! you don't know how mothers work on people here; they go on at a thing of that sort, and at last—oh, Sitt Irene, God is good, why did He not give me a son? She would have no excuse then."

"God knows why, my sweet one. He may yet

grant you the blessing, if it is right for you ; but your husband has not yet been waiting twenty years, like good Isaac," she added smiling ; "yet Isaac did not marry another than his dear Rebecca ; he prayed and waited."

"God had promised him the blessing through his seed," observed the young Circassian, with some shrewdness for one so little educated."

"We have to wait without a distinct promise certainly, for many things that we desire, just to wait God's will and give up our own," replied Irene ; "but it *is* God's will that an enlightened man like the Bey should keep his word in a case like this especially. Pray, dear sister, pray and faint not!" She then knelt and offered up an earnest petition for both the husband and wife ; and then, when poor Ain el Hayat was a little calmed, she proposed to send the Greek to stay with her for a few days. "Her skill about sickness and your altered looks, which show you not to be well, afford a very good reason for her coming to wait on you, and bringing some of her sedative herb drinks," she said ; "and you may trust *her*, if you want a message to me ; send it through her. Also, she is now a believer, and will be a comfort, I think."

"I suppose I must not ask to see the Bey ?"

"On no account," replied the young lady. "If you did so, as ladies do not here ask for gentlemen, Sitt Fatmeh would be suspicious of something, and would fancy I had engaged you to help me."

"Which would be the exact truth."

"However we must do nothing to offend that can possibly be avoided. I am going to my brother's now, and then home to my farm in the cool of the evening. I shall send Eurydice early to-morrow; she will be so delighted to be of any use to you, for she loves you dearly. Now, adieu, my dear sister!" And with a kind embrace, she took her leave.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KEY TO THE MYSTERY.

IRENE'S brother and his wife would not hear of her going back the next morning, but sent a swift messenger to convey her behest to Eurydice, who, going in the evening, arrived by moonlight at the farm, and was able to escort her back as soon as the day dawned, he having slept on the premises. An Egyptian country house is always provided with a few mats, &c., for chance visitors of a humble class, who can thus be accommodated in the "corn-room" or the "cotton-room," or any other of the little store places that chances to be vacant at the time.

The donkey with the Greek "deaconess," as we may now call the ex-slave, duly appeared at Edmund Hillyard's house as the family were leaving the breakfast table, and after being kindly greeted, rested, and refreshed, a carriage was called to take her to the Bey's hareem. Irene had merely told her the young lady was unwell and in trouble, but left the rest to be told by the person concerned, though indeed the chattering slaves would probably let out the cause of the distress pretty soon, as they pick up things very quickly.

That evening a hot wind, not very common in September, set in, and as it made the roads exceedingly disagreeable from dust, Esther Hillyard persuaded her sister to stay with them two or three days, by which time at farthest the sirocco wind would be probably over. It lasted longer than they expected, and was still blowing, though with abated violence, on the third day.

All this time they had heard nothing of Ain el Hayat except an answer to a message of inquiry that she was rather better, but still poorly. The family were sitting after tea in the large airy hall, lighted by a lamp hung from the ceiling; a table with candles was placed near one of the sofas (with which halls used as anterooms are generally provided), and the two ladies took out their work as soon as the children had been sent to bed. Mr. Hillyard was beginning to read a new pamphlet to them just received from England when there was a knock at the door, and unannounced the Bey entered and saluted them. Of course he was greeted cordially and begged to be seated. Evening visits are not rare among intimate acquaintances in Cairo, and the servant brought a glass of sherbet immediately. Zohrab sat silent till the man had left the room, and then at once entered on the object of his visit.

"You have heard from my wife," he said, addressing Irene, "about this fancy of my mother's? Poor woman! she has got it into her head, and she had

done me much harm, though she little thinks so. When those fools first spoke to her, as the custom is here, just to see if the idea of such a thing would be received or not, she ought to have at once told them of my resolution never to have two wives" (he turned red in spite of a dark complexion as he spoke, and an expression of disgust and annoyance came over his features). "It would all," he continued, "have stopped *then*—before they had taken it seriously, do you see?"

"I do indeed, and greatly regret it; but, Zohrab Bey, you don't surely mean to consent?" said Irene in a voice he only could hear.

"I? break my word to *her* and to God? Never, never, I declare to you," cried the Bey, speaking purposely so that all should hear him. "I declare to you, my friends, I was as angry as I was grieved that my poor mother, and my brother-in-law, too, should entertain such a notion; but whatever it costs her, she must give it up. I have told her that if she names such a thing again to me I will take my wife and go to Cyprus, where my father had purchased a small estate. I think you did not know I had property there, Mr. Hillyard?"

"No," said Edmund; "but I am glad to hear it, as if you want to go for a short time, it would be convenient."

"I do not want to leave Cairo, on the contrary; but it may be one day necessary; who can say? At present I am so anxious about my wife, I can hardly

think of anything; she is really ill to-day. I came partly to tell Sitt Irene how grateful I am to her for sending her sœur de charité, diaconesse, what is it you call Madame Eurydice now? She is so clever about sick persons. I have left her now with Ain el Hayat, and she seems to soothe and quiet her more than any one else. But, poor child, she is very nervous and unhappy! I see my mother has been talking to her; she seems not to believe me when I assure her this idea is perfectly ridiculous. Will you not go and see her to-morrow?"

"Certainly," replied Irene; "but you are yourself her best comforter under God."

"Tell me, Sitt Irene, and you, Mrs. Hillyard," said the Bey, "did you perceive that I was dispirited as my mother declared every one said? Ah! you smile; you *did* see it. Well, my English friends, *you* did not invent foolish reasons; you guessed the cause, I am sure."

"My brother, the women are sharper than we are; I think Irene guessed, but, indeed, I did not, until she told me," said Edmund.

"Told you what? speak, and do not fear to say what you think," said he.

"*She* thinks that you are beginning to see the kingdom of heaven and to wish to enter, and yet, feel the danger and trouble which might probably follow. And we all know one who is in hesitation about his views or his actions is usually restless and dissatisfied."

"You are right, Sitt Irene," turning to her; "Mr. Hillyard has interpreted your guess well, and it is a true one. I know that Jesus Christ is the captain of our salvation and no other. I believed this from the time I was in England; I went many times to the meetings for prayer, and to the church with your brother. I know the Bible is true; there are things hard to understand in it, but yet much that is plain and especially this, as I said. I have no faith in the sheikhs or mollahs any more. But the danger is great if I avow openly that I am not a Moslem; and, if I die, what is to become of my poor wife? I tremble for her more than myself; but, my dear friends, I will not deceive you, I am not willing to undergo the danger myself, and feel it. Were I a soldier, I think I could face the cannon and sword as bravely as another, and I have been in peril more than once, without shrinking like a woman; but to know that secret enemies are always watching to poison you, or to dread being given up to the Government and sent to the White Nile any day, I own it makes me shudder."

"We are flesh as well as spirit," said Edmund, "and the flesh must be appalled at the thought of such cruelty. God can give strength and courage even for these things, but also He can avert them if He sees fit; and I think we are permitted to pray for safety, especially when the welfare, moral as well as actual, of another depends on our safety."

"Have you let the father of the girl know that

you cannot accept his offer?" asked Irene, "or does he still think you agree?"

"I told him yesterday through my brother-in-law, who assures me he really applauds me and feels as I do; but he says under any circumstances it is a very difficult affair to manage. He fears that Saleem and his brother the Pasha will be affronted seriously; nay, that he is so already. My brother-in-law informed him, with a mouthful of compliments, according to custom, and, I dare say, of *excuses* also," added the young Bey, looking very indignant at the idea. "He made no reply at first, I am told; only bowed and saluted, and then said 'As they like; my brother's daughter has no need to wait for a bridegroom; it is just as they please.' But his manner was very sarcastic and unpleasant, and I feel certain he is no longer friendly to me—probably will quarrel with my brother-in-law, who, poor man, has had nothing to do with the foolish matter."

"Well, you know, where you have friends," said Edmund, "if you want anything I can possibly do for you, send me word any hour of the day or night, and you must look up, not down, my brother. Now we will read a chapter together, as our custom is, out of God's word;" and he opened the Bible at the prophet Isaiah, and read the fifty-first. He read in English, as the Bey could now easily follow in that language, and was very fond of it; but he provided him with an Arabic Bible to avoid the chance of

misunderstanding, as the prophets are not so easy to foreigners as narratives. Zohrab then told his friends he must go, as he did not like to be late on his wife's account; he had to go next day to the estate he possessed in the upper province, having business with the steward, and expected to be about three or four days.

"I ought, indeed, to have gone to-day," he said, "but I did not like leaving her unwell and sad."

Irene promised to do all in her power to cheer her, and thought his absence not a bad thing just at this moment.

He left them; and on his return home, found Ain el Hayat somewhat better, and her Greek friend (no more a slave, but a still more devoted attendant than when she had been so) watching tenderly over her, and trying to divert her mind by little anecdotes of the village people.

"Now, Ain el Hayat, you are not to fret and make yourself ill, for I have to go to the land in the upper province to-morrow," said he, affectionately taking her hand, when Eurydice had left her for a moment to fetch some drink for her.

"No, my love, I will not, since you tell me that you are not really going to do as your mother wishes," said she, hesitating and stammering.

"Why did you ever believe her in such a matter?" he said, a little sternly, for he had several times told her that it was nonsense.

"Because she said," whispered his wife, "that our Koran allows men to deceive a wife sometimes, and she insisted so much that you would do as other Moslems."

"You know perfectly that I do not any longer believe the Koran. It has good words in it, of course; but there are great errors; and these are things I do not agree to, and that contradict each other. I believe the Word of our God, and the Saviour of the Gospel is the only true Saviour. Did you not know this, dear one?

"I knew it for myself," she answered, with tearful eyes, yet beaming with joy; "but I always feared to say plainly such things to you, lest you might be angry with me. Oh, I thank God, beloved, that we feel the same! Never, never shall we be parted if our souls are together! I longed so to know if you believed in Him, the Lord, Zohrab; but if you had not spoken first I do not think I could ever have told you that I trust only in Him now;" and she hid her face on his shoulder, overcome with the change from sorrow to joy.

Some minutes passed before either could speak, and then Zohrab knelt and uttered a very broken prayer; for he was much unused to pray, except alone, and was, besides, much agitated. But a father can hear a child when not yet able to express fully its needs. And how much more does the All Merciful hear the cry of a young and feeble believer?

Zohrab remained silent for some time, seated on the divan, with his wife beside him. He stroked her hand tenderly now and then, but said not a word; he was thinking of the danger, and whether it was best to warn her. But it seemed, when so utterly vague, useless to frighten her. Besides, he was really puzzled what to do; he wanted time for thought and prayer. So he decided to say no more to Ain el Hayat at present, but on his return in a few days from the upper province, to see Mr. Hillyard again, and his sister and wife, and consult with them about the future. So he left the young wife to the care of the faithful Greek, who was waiting in the other room, having sent the slaves to sleep.

"We can depend on *you*," he said in a whisper. "Take care of my wife while I am away, for the sake of Christ!"

Eurydice looked at him meaningly, though without moving a muscle. "And see, my sister!" continued the Bey. "Do not let her eat anything from strange hands. Watch about the food just now. Dost thou understand?"

"I do, my lord; and the dear lady shall be as the apple of my eye till, by God's grace, you return in peace next week."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ENEMY IN HIS DEN.

NEAR the ancient and much venerated mosque of Sultan Hassan, where its exquisite domes and delicately carved minarets stand out against the blue Egyptian sky, is a somewhat narrow and mean-looking street, of which the buildings, irregular in form and size, are for the most part crumbling from age and neglect, or, we should perhaps rather say, were so, for not a few of the ruinous houses in Cairo, built too unsubstantially to bear the effects of time and want of attention, have fallen or been knocked down to make way for others, better built, or pretending, at any rate, to be so. These are not the fine old solid stone houses which we find in the heart of the city, as good as new, and a great deal better indeed, their only disadvantage being their situation in narrow, close streets, but far superior as well as more artistic than modern ones. We allude to an inferior sort of old house, composed partly of stone of a second rate quality, but chiefly of mud-brick, with wooden merhabeers, or small ornamented lattices projecting from the windows, and furnished with

stands for holding porous water-jars for drinking. The water is thus kept cool in the warmest weather by the constant evaporation, and yet the lattice is so constructed that the occupants of the room cannot be seen, the wood carving being so curious that the ladies can look through easily while quite invisible. Many of these are quite works of art, and look singular on houses of so mean an appearance, in other respects, as the one we are about to enter. It was the abode and property of Ahmed Mohammed, the man whose enmity to the Bey had, nearly two years before, caused his flight to Europe. How came a man who had power to injure so seriously a gentleman of wealth, good station and high character, to be himself in so much humbler a position? It came through some of those vicissitudes which occur in every country occasionally, but are more frequent in the East than anywhere else perhaps. The father of Ahmed had been a man of little education, little wealth, and indifferent character, but he was clever in a certain way, shrewd and keen as to business, a good observer of character in others, and with a great command of voice and manner. He made himself first useful, then agreeable, and finally indispensable to a great man, who was very unscrupulous, but too lazy to exert himself incessantly to find fresh agents for all his "dirty work." Mohammed became his universal assistant, and rapidly grew rich, of course. His son was sent to the Native College for Military Students,

then the only high school under Government. He was not literary by taste, but worked well with an object; and, urged by his father, made fair progress; but his love of pleasure made it necessary for the old man to keep him up to the mark by alternate threats and coaxing. He came through his examinations tolerably, but was angry to find Zohrab, who was also a scholar and some years his junior, far above him. His enmity had already begun; however, it slumbered then, for he had other matters more important to occupy him. We need not follow the career of such a man: a bold villain who lives by adventures on land or by sea may furnish a certain degree of interest, though scarcely of pleasure, unless his vices are mixed with at least a few virtues or redeeming qualities; but an intriguing villain, who winds and turns like a serpent, in order to gain his own selfish ends, and undermines the good of others to fill his purse, or get a profitable situation, is not a character we like to trace minutely, and follow in detail.

Suffice it to say, that Ahmed having inherited a considerable fortune from his father (how amassed, no one cared to inquire), and all his powers of self-advancement added to a better education, rose rapidly; and by the time he was four-and-thirty years of age, was considered by some a very clever, and by others a very cunning man, and feared by those whom he was opposed to, as a dangerous enemy. He spent extravagantly, but kept the

coffers well filled by the numerous bribes he received, and was advancing in wealth and influence, though the latter was rather secret than avowed influence, when Zohrab again stood, as he thought, in his light. He fancied (for it was not a true surmise) that the princess who had bestowed one of her adopted Circassian daughters on the young Bey, would have favoured him equally, or in his stead, perhaps, had not Zohrab been there.

In several smaller affairs, he seemed to be his rival to the jealous eyes of the man, who from a boy, had envied the handsome comrade, who had always held aloof from him. He had supposed this to be from pride, as being of higher race, for Ahmed's mother was a low peasant woman; and, little as birth is thought of in the East, where power and wealth alone hold sway in general, he thought the young Zohrab avoided him partly on that account; it was, in reality, that his love of gambling, and low pleasures of various sorts, made the more respectable youths all look unfavourably on him; but there were but few such at the time he was in the college, and he attributed everything to Zohrab's influence. Like a serpent in the wall, he was ready to sting when opportunity served, but kept out of sight meanwhile.

In the affair with the peasants, the Bey had got into trouble entirely through Ahmed's machinations and false statements; and though he had a little

comfort in knowing that the man he so basely tried to injure was made unhappy and put to great expense by his long journey, still that was not the revenge he had sought, and did not satisfy him at all. It was not even a disgraceful banishment—a sojourn in Europe, which was, after all, a treat rather than punishment. To make matters worse, when Zohrab had been absent a few months, the minister, as we know, who had been Ahmed's chief friend, died; and a man who disliked him came into office. He was left without the agency employment, which, by help of bribes and extortions, had proved so lucrative, and as he did not restrain his extravagant tastes, he soon became impoverished; and, at last, had been obliged to part with his large and handsome villa on the Shoobra road, and sell most of his slaves, and retire to the dilapidated dwelling-house formerly occupied by his father and grandfather before him. Here he was sitting on the day following the evening of our last chapter. He was reclining on a shabby sofa, near the window in an upper room, clad in a loose native robe, much more at his ease in it than in the European suit of clothes which lay on a chair near him ready to be donned whenever he went out, this being a common summer custom in Cairo, when the officials of Government and most of the higher class of men have adopted the dress worn in Constantinople; it is the European slightly modified, and usually of the darkest colours: most unsuited to the

summer climate therefore. They usually lay it aside on entering the privacy of their homes, and unbend in the caftan and slippers. Ahmed was a man of middle size, with rather coarse features and sly-looking eyes, which seemed never to be gazing straight forward, but always peeping out of the corners. His complexion was, like that of most Egyptians whose origin is from the upper provinces, extremely dark, so much so that if much exposed to the sun, like his peasant relatives, it would, like theirs, be nearly the hue of light mahogany; but a town life and habits gave a more sallow and less healthy tinge to the face. His figure was rather stout for his age, but not so as to make him clumsy or wanting in activity.

Like most Eastern apartments in those days, when cheap French articles of adornment or furniture had not yet found their way to Egypt, there was very little in the room except the divan and praying-carpet, when in his former abode his rooms had been lavishly supplied with all that Persia and Damascus could furnish of rich carpets and brocaded divans and curtains, but a room with old and shabby things of this kind and without the books and writing-tables which we should expect in the place where an educated man spent his private hours, looks dull and comfortless. A pipe seemed Ahmed's only companion; but he was evidently expecting some one, for he opened the lattice and looked out once or twice, then shut it, to exclude the glaring sun, and again crouched up in

his corner with a very uneasy expression on his countenance. All at once a clapping of hands was heard below, a voice answered from above, then a servant was heard opening the locked door, and at the same moment an Abyssinian slave entered the room, and said:

"He is come, master. Shall I tell the boab to show him into the salamlik, or will your Honour see him here?"

"Here. Send him up, and then go to make sherbet and coffee. And it is near noon, Shellabeya! get some kabobs from the market, and prepare something that we may eat in an hour or two."

The Abyssinian, who was a pretty woman, though her large black eyes had a curious look in them, half soft, half savage, only replied by a smile and a slight nod, and left the room. A minute later the expected guest entered, a man of about fifty years old, dressed like a scribe or secretary, with an inkhorn in the striped silk girdle at his waist. He had a spare figure and a lined forehead, which was narrow, the fullness over the eyebrows only, showing the observing faculties to be the principal ones in his head; but he looked altogether a sharp fellow. He was evidently either an intimate friend or an agent of Ahmed, for they were on very familiar terms, though the latter was the superior.

"Well, Ismael," said he, after the usual salutations were over, "have you anything to tell me?"

"Several things, Effendi. But first I have a bit of news which will make you laugh. Ha, ha! Yes, only think, Effendi, that Zohrab Bey has offended Saleem Mohammed Pasha by refusing to marry his daughter! His mother, Sitt Fatmeh, had wished it, and when the *dalala* made her the offer, as those people do, you know, not directly, but in a *way*; she caught at the idea, and was quite delighted. She wanted to secure so powerful a friend for her son, naturally, and expected to have no trouble with him, as it is said that he is displeased at having no heir. But she proved mistaken. Mashallah, the old lady was finely balked, and the young one also, for they do say (though, of course, it is a secret) that the Pasha's daughter was desirous of the match, having had a peep behind the lattice. You know Zohrab is very handsome."

"Pshaw, what nonsense is this? Tell me facts, good Ismael; never mind Zohrab's looks. He has declined the honour, it seems."

"Yes, Effendi; and the Pasha is annoyed. It was his brother's daughter, by the way, not his own (for she is married); but it is the same thing; he is attached to his brother, and his niece has been brought up in his hareem. Saleem is furious, they say, and neither of them will move to defend Zohrab if he *should* get into any trouble. Who can tell?—something might occur;" and the expression of his eyes became malevolent to such a degree that one could

excuse the superstition for thinking they had the evil power in them.

Ahmed was silent for a minute, and then said:

"Have I a good chance of obtaining that place which Zohrab holds, if he were out of the way? I don't want to run any risk, however small; one's own head, by the prophet, is more than twenty thousand purses! Yet I am now with an empty house almost. I cannot think of any situation so good as his. He makes little out of it; nothing, I fancy, indeed, of any consequence. But he is so foolishly kind, and besides so well off, he *need* not *take*." (The situation he alluded to was some office under Government, not in itself so lucrative as many, but affording opportunities of taking bribes and gifts.)

"I had almost got the promise of it, when that brother-in-law asked the post for him; it was just after his return from Europe. I wish the sea had drowned him on his way, by the beard of the prophet! that man is always between me and the sunshine."

"But you do not know," said his agent, "that Zohrab is going to-day to the upper province, where he has that estate beyond Minieh. I forget the name of the village; he is going to make some arrangement with the steward about a new sugar-mill. He will go by the new railway as far as Minieh, and a horse will meet him there. I heard it through the boab at his house, who told a slave of mine whom I sent on a

pretext ; they don't guess that I belong in any way to your interests, or their mouths would have been sealed up as tight as a money-bag."

"Ah ! that is news, indeed ; and the distance from the railroad is, I know, very long, four hours' ride, I think, and a lonely country; no roads, all sugar canes."

"Nothing could be better ; but take care, my brother, do not raise your voice; the very birds in the air must not know what we speak about."

"It is not necessary to speak at all; you know what I mean, perfectly. I trust no one among the slaves, although that woman pretends to be attached to me ; but we need not even say any word that could injure us if it were called out in the market-place. See, Ismail, all that is wanted a couple, or, say *three* unscrupulous and poor fellows ; *poor* I say. Such as would kill their own mother for a mouthful of bread ; there is time enough. He is to be away three days, you say ; that will do."

"Quite so. The canes are tall and make good shelter. Whatever the men find is part of their reward ; it will be imagined to be a robbery, and nothing will be known till a month has passed, and they begin cutting the canes. But it must be on his return, as I have to find the men."

The two worthies had forgotten that these words, though not spoken very loud, were sufficiently intelligible, had any one been listening, to condemn them

both. They drew closer, however, and ended their conference in a whisper. As soon as from the neighbouring minaret the hour of noon was announced by the Muezzin, they both moved back to their former places on the divan, and began to speak on indifferent matters, knowing that interruption was at hand. The slave presently appeared with coffee, and after a brief interval, brought in the slight mid-day meal she had prepared by her master's orders. Some further business was arranged after dinner, in which the chink of money might have been heard had an observer been near; but the miscreant locked the door before he opened his purse, and did everything to avoid detection. But though he often called on the Holy Name he did not think that the All-seeing Eye was upon him; and that the voice he could not hear because his conscience was seared as with a hot iron, had said, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther."

CHAPTER XVII.

AMONG THE SUGAR-CANES.

THE day was fair and bright when, having completed his business in the upper province, Zohrab Bey mounted his fine Arabian horse, and with only his faithful Nubian as companion, left the Abbadeeh and set forth on his homeward journey. Though still full of anxiety as to his future plans, and troubled at times with doubts and fears, he felt much lighter since he had come to the explanation with his wife; one burden, at least, seemed lifted off his heart, and he saw, on looking back, how much his trouble had been increased by bearing it alone. The conversation and prayer with his English friends had not been without their effect also, and he was enabled to trust God and hope in Him much more than he had hitherto been doing. The ride in the fresh early morning invigorated mind and body alike, and the young man felt in happy spirits after he had gone an hour on his way, and smiled pleasantly at his young attendant, who made occasional remarks on what they passed. It was lonely enough: except for a few peasants at work in the maize and cane fields, hardly

a creature was to be seen, until they came to a straggling village of mud-hovels, and then, indeed, life was teeming; the little dirty children, nearly and often quite naked, came running after the horseman to see the fine housings of his Turkish saddle and beg for backsheesh; the women, with pitchers on their heads, paused in their way towards the water, to look at the handsome stranger, and such of the peasants as were not out in the fields at work looked up from the dust heap on which they were seated smoking their morning pipe, to give him a cheerful and civil salutation. They were not really lazy, though one might fancy so, seeing them sitting still at nine o'clock in the morning, but they had been all at work by daylight, and this was their hour for a little rest and a frugal breakfast, generally only a flap of coarse bread, perhaps a slice of water-melon, but oftener nothing but dry bread and cold water.

After this village was passed (they stopped in it a quarter of an hour to let the horse rest a little, and the lad also, and to procure some fresh goat's milk for the refreshment of both master and servant) they proceeded on their journey across country, and no other village was near for a considerable distance, perhaps a couple of miles, or even further still. The only human habitations were a few Bedouin tents near a small grove of palms just discernible over the fields of sugar-canes, beside which, on the narrow path used by the peasants, they were now travelling at a

slow pace, the boy following the horse, as there was not room for him beside it. Beyond the palm grove lay the wide expanse of yellow sand, marking where the desert began. The Bedouins had apparently camped just on the confines, where cultivation and the wilderness met, but at this time of day they would not most likely be in their tents, save the women and children. This was, therefore, the spot distant from the villages, and out of reach of interference from passers-by, that the enemies, or rather the hired assassins, had selected as the most suitable for their vile intention of waylaying and murdering the young Bey on his homeward journey.

Unsuspecting and cheerful he rode along cautiously, lest his noble steed should slip his foot into one of the dangerous holes sometimes left by the inundation in the paths of dried mud between the fields; but as little guessing that a worse danger was near as the animal himself could be. The dumb creature indeed was the first to discover mischief, with that fine sense of perception which belongs to the highest races of horses particularly, the Arab courser seemed aware of some strange influence near; perhaps he heard the slight rustle among the cane leaves, though the assassins were creeping along at some distance among the plants, and so softly that not only did not Zohrab, preoccupied in mind, perceive anything, but his Nubian boy, though possessing the quick observation of most half-savage races, did not yet notice it.

Presently the horse pricked his ears again and gave a slight snort as of terror. Both master and servant then stopped for a second.

"Do you see any one, Hamid?" asked the Bey. "The horse is startled; can it be a serpent in the path?"

"I will look, my lord," peering about with his keen black eyes, as he spoke. "No, I see nothing; let me lead him a few minutes;" and suiting the action to the word, he took the bridle up to where two of the narrow little footpaths met.

At that instant three men, all armed with guns, darted at the same time out of the canes, and while one knocked down the boy with the butt end of his weapon, the two others fired both at once on the Bey. He was struck on the left shoulder by the ball of one, but the other missed, because the horse reared, though they fired together as nearly as possible. They were not trained to arms like soldiers, and there was a second between the shots, and the first only took effect therefore, and that not mortally; and before they could take aim for the second shot, wounded as he was, the Bey had had time—for he had presence of mind as well as courage—to draw the pistols from his holster and fire. One of his assailants was shot through the head, and fell dead at once. The third ruffian had meanwhile been grappled by Hamid, who, though but a lad, was brave, and having been thrown down without being much hurt, had clung round the legs of his foe, and succeeded in pulling

him down. His gun went off in the struggle, but without effect, except to frighten the horse, who plunged and reared violently. The Bey, from whose shoulder the blood was now streaming, could not keep his seat under this motion, and sank backwards on the ground, rolled over the raised pathway into the little channel of water that ran alongside of it. The horse was now frantic, and prevented the two assailants who were unwounded from reaching his master—quite unintentionally, of course, but effectually—for two or three minutes, the path being very narrow and his kicks no trifle. One of the men was knocked down by his fore-feet, and received a severe blow on the head, falling against a large stone; the other, however, succeeded in pushing his way on the other side through the canes, and was just loading his gun again to give the death-shot to the prostrate victim, in case the wound was not mortal (though he lay senseless and appeared dying), but before he could accomplish this, or his stunned comrade was revived enough to come to his help, there was a violent rushing sound in the canes, and a camel appeared floundering through them at a tremendous pace, followed by several men and boys. At this, the assassins saw their game was up. They thought the Bey was probably dead, or soon would be so, and they might claim the reward; but they risked discovery too much if they lingered to make it sure. The horse, at sight of the camel, had

given one more desperate plunge, and darted off at full speed (and an Arab horse's speed is little short of lightning) in the direction of the desert; the assassins dragged their comrade under a thorn bush which grew near an old Sacchia, apparently disused, hard by, and then took to their heels, snatching up, however, the Bey's pistols, both of which had fallen on the ground after he fired. The pursuers of the camel saw them running away, but could not extricate themselves from the sugar-canes until they had got to some distance, as they ran on the path. No one who has not tried to walk through a field of sugar-canes can tell how difficult it is to get along, even at a slow pace; as to running, it is not possible, unless one had the long legs and powerful body of the camel. They were Bedouins from the palm grove in the distance, and their camel had by chance broken its tether that morning and got loose; the men had been seeking it for an hour, and at last had found it, devouring the sweet canes very leisurely in one of the fields. As soon as the creature heard their voices it started off again, quite aware that it was trespassing, and bounded along, crushing down the crops famously in its progress, till they reached the scene which we have been describing, just in time to save Zohrab's life. The Bedouins came up to the spot, not knowing what had occurred, but seeing rather with glee than horror that some sort of a "row" had been going on, and that perhaps a chance of picking up a little plunder might be at hand.

But the young Nubian was up to the emergency; before they had got through the canes (and we must remember that sugar-canes, when full grown, are higher than a man's head, besides being so thick in growth that it is almost like making a way through a labyrinth of knives with the blades in all directions, as they cut the face and hands, from the quantity of flint in the leaves), the Arabs were unable to see anything near at hand, though they heard the cries and plunging. He quickly dragged his master into the thickest of the brake on his side of the way, and crushed the canes down over him, so that without a close search he could not be found; and then, by shouts and cries and gesticulations, he called the attention of the newcomers to the man who lay now really dead under the bushes at the Sacchia, and to the horse, which was only to be seen at a distance, apparently bound for the desert. One ran off to catch him, as valuable booty, and another secured the camel. There were only two men, the rest of the party were boys of various ages, three big and two mere little children. These last scrambled like monkeys up the camel's back the instant it was caught, and settled themselves on the animal's hump, with the rude pack fixed by ropes making (for them) a very good saddle. The older man, who wore a ragged burnoose and a coloured handkerchief on his head, bound over an old tarboush of red felt, and had the black and rather scanty beard, keen eyes, and sharp features often

seen among his race, now turned to Hamid, who was trying to make him attend to the dead man. It appeared natural that the horse should belong to the victim, as he supposed, of a murder, for he could not at the distance tell that the horse was saddled as no peasant's steed ever was; besides the man might have been a fellow-servant of Hamid's for aught he could tell, bringing home a master's steed, so he examined the supposed victim, not very closely, fearing to get into difficulties if found near a body, as is the case in Egypt if any one who belonged to Government happened to see or hear of it. Seeing life was extinct, he began to question the lad, who, though weeping genuinely, and full of dismay lest his dear lord should expire for want of care, dreaded the wild sons of the desert too much in the case of a well-clad man with money and jewels about him to reveal where he was hidden, and while answering (as he thought suited the occasion) he contrived to lead the man in the direction of the horse and away from Zohrab, and so naturally did he do this that the Sacchia lay between them and the scene of the attack before many minutes were passed. The Bedouin was thinking more of the horse than of a ragged dead man or a crying boy, and he soon marched off on the pathway as fast as he could, and gradually left his young companion behind—as he wished. The three boys had rushed after the first Bedouin, and were by this time out of sight. Had the two assassins been near enough they might now

have returned, but they, seeing a man and three lads running on the narrow raised path behind them, never slackened speed till they reached another Sacchia more than half a mile off. Here the one who had fallen against the stone was seized with giddiness and fainted, from running in the hot sun after so hard a blow. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel; his comrade gave him some water (for this Sacchia was at work, and the water was pouring freely from the pitchers fastened to the huge water-wheel), then he told the peasant boy who was guiding the buffalo which turned the wheel, that the man had fallen and knocked his head, and would rest till he felt better; he was in haste to go on, and could not delay. The boy was not pleased to have a sick man apparently left on his hands, but he was too young to have anything to say about it, so he went on crying heigh! to the buffalo, and the ruffian, after a deep draught of water, went on his way, taking care to carry in his vest well concealed the two pistols of the Bey. The other gradually recovered, and in an hour's time followed slowly, and finally rejoined him at night in a village where they slept, and next day went back towards Cairo.

Meanwhile the Nubian had hurried back to his master, and found him, though still unconscious, evidently alive; he was unable of course to guess how severe or how slight might be the wound, but he judged it was not mortal; the fall from the horse had

not, as far as he could tell, broken any bones, but the shock had been great, and the colourless lips and ashy face terrified the poor affectionate boy. He did the little he could, first soaking his master's handkerchief in the water of the little channel which fortunately was flowing (the fields are watered in turn, and some days the little irrigation canals will be found quite dry therefore). He laid this on the forehead, and then very gently and carefully raised the body slightly by pushing clods of earth under, as a lever, till he could ascertain if the blood was still flowing; as he lay on his back, he could only know this by raising him a little. As far as he could see, the flow was somewhat less, but the blood was still oozing. He therefore tore up a part of his own shirt, and with that and his own turban unrolled, made a thick bandage, which he fastened with considerable handiness, considering he had not been trained in such matters. He then dipped his fingers in the water, and drop by drop made a little fall on the closed lips. At last they parted, and a deep breath showed there was something like reviving. Some wild plants, that grew near had he knew a strong aromatic odour, and gathering a handful he bruised them and held to his master to smell, and soon saw him open his eyes, then he groaned faintly, as with pain, and closed them again.

Hamid could but rejoice to see him at any rate living, though he knew not what to do. He tried in

a low voice (lest any one should be near) to cheer and comfort him, declaring he would soon be better and Mashallah! the wound would be nothing by the blessing of God and the prophet.

"If my horse were here," at last the Bey murmured feebly.

Hamid had little hope that the animal could escape the Bedouins, but such was the animal's intelligence and affection that he thought he would return to the place unless caught. He sat by the Bey, giving him water in his brass travelling-cup, which he had succeeded in getting out of his pocket, and renewed the water on the head; this was all that he could do at present.

"If a woman comes this way we shall have help, for they have hearts and will have pity," said he.

"God will help," murmured his master faintly.

"Truly, my lord; one who like you fears God will not be abandoned," sobbed the lad, kissing his hands. He raised his master's head so as to lay it upon his knee, and thus supported him in some degree. "Allah kereem!" he repeated from time to time, till at last to his great joy he discerned two women with pitchers coming along the path at no great distance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AMONG THE BEDOUIN TENTS.

HAMID soon perceived that the women were Bedouins, from their dress. They wore the crimson triangular face-veil, with little silver coins sewed all round the edges, which marks the women of this race. It is sometimes white, and not red; but the shape is the same, and the coins invariable, though their value and number differ, of course. The hair, instead of hanging down the back inside the outer head-veil, or mantle, as with Egyptian women, is fastened in thick plaits round the forehead, just above the eyebrows; unless, as is the case with some, the hair in front is cut short like the present fashion for young ladies. Their garments of limp, dark blue linen or cotton, resembled those of ordinary peasants, and it is scarcely needful to observe that their language was that of Egypt. Some words and expressions, however, which are peculiar to Bedouins, always show at once the true descendants of that nomade Asiatic race, which has given its language to the whole of Northern Africa.

As soon as they approached within hearing distance,

Hamid called to them, and both stood still, amazed; but there was nothing in the Nubian lad to alarm them, and they waited till he ran up and began volubly to explain what the case was:

"Oh, my sisters!" he exclaimed, "by the prophet, and by the heads of your fathers, have pity on a noble lord who is here in suffering and wounded. Ye are mothers! that God may preserve your little ones, have mercy, and come quickly to help my master!"

"Who is thy master, my son?" asked the older of the two, her small but brilliant eyes full of curiosity; not, however, unmingled with compassion and interest, as they peered over the face-veil, which concealed all the rest of her countenance.

"He is a Bey!" replied the lad, who had an instinctive idea that it might be as well not to give his lord's name to strangers under the circumstances, "and he is good, like an angel of heaven, and handsome! Look how ill he is! will you let him perish for want of help?"

"Nay, by thy father's life, my son, we are not so cruel. The children of the Arab have hearts. Mashallah, but he is a beautiful young man! How is he hurt?"

"We were travelling from my lord's Abbadech, and robbers set upon us—he is brave as Antar, and slew one, and the other two fled; but he is wounded in his left shoulder," replied Hamid, who justly thought

the truth was the best thing to be spoken. I fear had he conceived a lie to be more likely to excite compassion and gain the aid he needed, he would not have scrupled to tell it, but he really preferred telling the truth if it did as well, if only that his master always scolded him if he ever detected him in a fib.

The younger woman, who was daughter-in-law to the older, now aided her mother to raise him gently, and they examined the wound as far as without undoing the bandage was possible.

"For the moment we must let the blood dry on it or he will bleed to death," said the older woman, who had some experience among her guerilla-like people, of shots and cuts. "If the ball be in we must try to get it out when he is at our tents; but you, daughter, must go and bring your brother and the camel, he cannot walk."

"God bless and reward you, my sisters! your hearts are white," said Hamid, "and my lord will be grateful to you for your kindness; he has in Cairo wealth enough, and will buy you a dozen camels on our return by God's mercy!"

He was anxious by these words to keep them from being tempted by the occasion into searching his master's pockets; but when put on their honour the usually-plundering Bedouins are strangely trustworthy.

Hamid had formerly been with some desert Arabs, and happened to know the form of words that ex-

presses their most solemn oath, and determined to get it from the chief of the Arabs. For security, however, he had taken his master's purse and put all the gold into a bit of rag, which he tied carefully like a charm round his own waist inside his garments, and then had returned the purse with the silver in it to its place. The watch and ring he did not like to meddle with, lest he might himself appear a thief if they were found on him, or if his master suddenly missed them.

Before the woman came back with the camel, one of the Bedouins appeared not far off, pursuing the horse, which apparently was endeavouring to retrace his way to his master. He was, however, weary; and the man had very nearly run him down, having been with the boys round and round in a wide circle; but Hamid darted forward and called aloud; the faithful animal, at the well-known voice, made a fresh effort, and with a few bounds stood panting beside him. The woman hurried forward now and told her husband, for such he was, what she had learned from the boy, and declared that they must not take a hair of the mane of a horse belonging to one who was thrown thus on their hospitality, and whose servant had appealed to them in the name of God!

Hamid added his word, but the strongest appeal was from the Bey himself, who, with a great effort, raised his voice enough to say, "I come in God's name, and ask to be your guest, brother."

The Bedouin went up to him directly, took his hand, and swore to protect and help him. The woman nodded, and probably smiled, if her mouth had been visible—knowing he was now as safe as if he had eaten bread and salt in the tent, and helped her husband to place the sufferer on his horse before his servant, who supported him in his arms while the man led the steed gently in the direction of the palms. The black goats'-hair tents were pitched among these on the very edge of the desert, and into one of these Zohrab was carried by the Bedouin and Hamid, for he was quite unable to walk. They laid him on a mat, and put a roll of something under his head, and the old woman steeped dates bruised and chopped in some water, and made him drink the liquid, for fever was setting in, and he was thirsty. When evening came the rest of the tribe returned, about twenty-five or thirty men, heads of families, besides a few youths and the wives and children of the party, with flocks of goats, a few sheep, and several camels and donkeys. The sheikh had a horse, or rather a mare, with her foal, of a wiry desert breed, not the beautiful Arab of the Nejeed, for which Arabia has so long been famed, but an active and fleet animal, very useful on the sand, and hardy as can be. The sheikh had also the distinction of a silk kuffeeh on his head (Bedouins do not wear turbans, but a kerchief, or shawl of silk or cotton flung loosely on the head over the felt cap, and fixed by a rope of camel's-hair). He had silver-mounted

pistols, a couple of rifles, and two wives, each of whom had a division of the tent for herself and her children. The rest had cotton kuffeehs, or very old silk ones nearly in rags, one gun and one wife only, being too poor for more.

The Nubian was kindly treated and given plenty of bread, dates, and new milk, and when he was refreshed they all tried to make him tell all about his master, the journey, and the assassination attempted upon him.

Hamid was very willing to give details on the latter affair, but he would not tell his master's name. "He can tell you if he likes, when he is well; he is the Bey, that is enough," he said. He watched by the mat where his lord lay till sleep at last overcame the poor youthful eyes, weary with excitement and fatigue, and he slept till the sun was high.

The old woman then told him she had come to sit by his master as soon as she saw him asleep, and that the fever had caused him to wander a great deal in the night, adding, "We ought to try and get out the ball, or he will die."

Hamid wept bitterly for a time, then he roused himself, and asked "if he should go to fetch a doctor?"

"He will die before you can return; there is none to be found anywhere near; but do not be uneasy, my son, the sheikh is clever; my husband has already spoken to him, and he will get out the ball. I am

going to prepare some herbs to lay on the place after, by God and the prophet's blessing, it is taken out."

Hamid was in great misery, for he feared their hurting him dreadfully, and, perhaps, making him worse; but he could not bear to leave him in strange hands, and it would, certainly, take two days, at least, to go and return with a surgeon.

Zohrab was half unconscious, but made no resistance to their doing as they would. In fact, his nurse had given him opium purposely, that he might remain drowsy; she had a small quantity kept for such occasions. The sheikh was not a delicate surgeon, though naturally *handy*, as are so many Arabs; but he did his best, and after much torture, poor Zohrab was shown the ball extracted from his wound, after he recovered from a long fainting fit. They bound the place with the old woman's herbs, and made him swallow a preparation of dates and milk to prevent exhaustion, and then let him rest, while the Nubian rubbed his feet gently to promote sleep.

There was no fear now on either his part or Hamid's of treachery or robbery on the part of the Bedouins; their sheikh was pledged by the law of hospitality, and the women were already bound to the stranger by pity and kindness. Their tents were rude indeed, for the noble stranger, used to marble halls; but they were opened with desert hospitality and kindness, and the sufferer, as far as he was able, acknowledged the kindness with gratitude.

Whether the rough doctoring or the hurt itself, or the fall, were the cause, or all three, so it happened that Zohrab had a sharp attack of fever the next night and was delirious, though too feeble from loss of blood to be violent. His servant soon learned from words dropped in his fever, that his master dreaded the same enemy he had feared formerly, who was pretty well known to all his domestics, but was supposed now to be out of the way, as no one had lately heard his name. That he was the cause of the late attack, his master evidently fancied, and Hamid felt certain rightly—the more he thought of it the more sure he felt ; the knowing of his journey ; the attack in broad daylight; the details of the affair altogether assured him it was not a common robbery. Zohrab seemed possessed with the idea that he ought to hide, or be hidden, till he could travel again, and the boy thought, perhaps, he was afraid that the enemy was seeking him. It was merely, however, the effect of excitement acting on a fevered frame in reality, but it made Hamid anxious, instead of going back to the Abbadech, which was only two or three hours' distance, for help (as would have been natural) to get his master's presence concealed from the peasants of the district. The tribe he found were going that morning (the second after the attack) to move across the desert to a distant spot among the rocks and sandhills, where was a well of drinkable water, and thorny shrubs for the camels. They were to stay a short time

there for some purpose of their own, gazelle shooting, or some other reason. Hamid did not care much what it was, but they intended, he ascertained, to cross by short journeys, at intervals of a few days, a tract of desert land, and get to the river again lower down. The Nile winds so much, that people may, by land, cut across the desert and take it up again at another bend. This seemed to Hamid the safest thing, if his master could possibly travel, as he evidently feared some plot, and the boy thought, who could be sure the steward was not in it himself? He resolved to ask him, and although poor Zohrab was only half himself, he did so.

"Oh! yes, Hamid," replied the patient; "let us go on by all means. They will not find us in the desert. Yes, I can go; I can ride." And he tried to raise himself, and, of course, sank back with a groan of pain on his hard couch.

Neither his kind Bedouin nurses nor the boy were aware how little he was capable of judging of his own state, and they agreed that he should be placed in a sort of litter, rudely constructed of tent poles and goats'-hair curtains, and slung between two camels, while Hamid should ride his horse.

The sheikh was the more willing to arrange this plan that he wanted to move on, and could ill afford to leave men enough to protect his guest behind. All was, therefore, settled, and they started next morning.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HAKEEM.

AS might have been anticipated, however, the journey proved very trying; the camel's pace, not at all disagreable to a person in full health, is too jolting to be endured by an invalid easily, and when they halted at night Zohrab was very ill. They did their utmost for him and made him a soft couch by laying sheep-skins one over the other, and fed him with fresh milk, which was the only nourishment he could take. By morning he appeared a little better, and, though very suffering, was quite conscious. All day he lay in the tent without moving, but towards evening the strengthening desert air seemed to revive him, and he fell asleep more calmly. Hamid sat watching at the opening of the black curtain; the Bedouins were kindling a fire at a little distance, of brushwood, brought by the children; the women were kneading unleavened cakes on sheep or goat skins laid with the hair or wool on the sand and the smooth side up, a rude and not very clean kneading board truly, but the sons of Ishmael are not choice in such matters. One of the girls brought some eggs and put

in a circle round the fire, sticking them in the sand to cook thus; and another brought dates and wooden bowls full of the evening's milk. While the supper was thus in active preparation, and the setting sun was just sinking behind the horizon, and the pink and amber and pale opal, the matchless hues of the desert sunset, were spreading over the sky, figures were discerned coming over the nearest sandhill, which had hidden them till that moment from view; a man riding on a camel and followed by two or three Bedouins on foot. A few minutes sufficed to show that it was a man wrapped in a white Arab burnoose, but otherwise dressed as a European; the terror of poor Hamid was extreme, but before he could warn his friends not to betray the presence of his master in the tent to strangers, one of the Bedouins following the camel ran swiftly forward and exchanged a few words with the sheikh, and was then warmly greeted by all the party round the fire. It was clear from the reception that he and his comrades were friends, in fact it soon came out that they were of the same tribe. There were embracings, salutations, congratulations in succession, and laughs of pleasure and white teeth displayed on many a dark face, with cries of "Ya Hossein! ya Mahmoud, ya Masoud, ya Alee!" &c. One of the older women fell on the neck of the youngest of the three new-comers and greeted him loudly as her son. Meantime the older one had formally presented the camel-rider as an English lord

of high degree, whom he and his comrades were escorting from an oasis in the desert much farther up, which he had wished to visit; he had had a companion, another gentleman, but the other got tired of the camel riding very soon, and had turned back with the dragoman, and this one could speak Arabic well, and had come on with them, and was on his way back to Cairo. They had promised to take him to visit the tents of their tribe, if he was willing, as they expected to meet them on their road towards the river.

"He is an Englishman, but like one of us, he knows our ways and speaks our tongue," added the informant to Hamid, as the stranger, throwing back his burnoose, saluted the sheikh with all due form in the right manner, and then stooping down took from the heap of bread cakes which were in a basket ready for supper, a small piece which he dipped in the salt that was placed in a little heap on a skin ready for the eggs, and first saying, "In the name of God," he gravely ate it, bowing with a courteous glance round the circle. The sheikh held out his brawny hand to him with a smile and the others applauded, saying, "Mashallah! that is a man indeed; he is our brother, welcome, welcome a thousand times." He was now pressed to share the evening meal, and did so cheerfully, for he was very hungry after the long ride. He was a man not yet of middle age, perhaps three or four and thirty, at most, but had a serious and digni-

fied expression, increased by the beard he wore and the ample kuffeeh adopted for the journey instead of a "Frank hat." He told his Arab host that he was named Freeman, and had been acquainted with Syria in his early youth, his father having been once a merchant in Aleppo, and then in Damascus; which accounted for his knowledge of Arabic. He had not been in the East for several years, however, being settled in England, but had been advised, after an illness, to spend some time in this part of the world, and having long wished to see Egypt, he had come earlier than travellers usually do, in the middle of September, and had now (the end of the month) been visiting the oasis, and was on his return, as before said. While they sat eating near the tent door, the sheikh said to the guest, "Are you a doctor, sir?"

"Not by my business," replied the Englishman, who was well aware that the Bedouins have often the idea that all Englishmen, or indeed *Franks* of a grave and respectable appearance, are doctors, probably because travellers generally give something from their medicine chest to any one who is ailing or pretends he is, for Bedouins are fond of getting medicine, not that they actually enjoy the bad taste, but the having a thing they know to be of *some* value for *nothing* has a charm.

"Are you Hakeem?" (literally meaning wise person, but the name usually given medical men) is constantly asked of strangers, who soon learn

the meaning of the word, when put in the interrogative, and seeing their tent beset by men with various infirmities, to whom a dose is a boon, and the more unpleasant the better, as being more costly in their idea probably.

Mr. Freeman smiled when the question was put to him, for he was prepared for it. He replied that he was able to do a little Hakeem's work, though his special occupation was rather with men's souls than their bodies.

"Indeed! how can that be?" said the sheikh, "our souls are in the keeping of the powerful. God is great, and the prophet," &c.

He had now got into a string of Moslem ejaculatory prayers, and went on muttering to himself for a minute or two, during which his guest finished his bowl of milk. He then resumed, and explained in a simple way the duties of his calling, so far as they could be understood by half-savage men.

"We have a sick man here," observed the sheikh stroking his beard, while the woman took away the remains of the meal from the skin which had served at once as table-cloth and table. "A man of position from the city; he needs help, for he has been wounded severely, and though we managed to extract the ball, he suffers much still."

"He has then been wounded by a shot? Was it a robber?" asked Mr. Freeman with great interest. Several voices at once began to relate all they knew

of the story, adding so many conjectures of their own, that the thread of truth bade fair to be twisted up with additions till it became a thick rope The stranger picked out the chief parts, however.

"What most concerns us," said he, "is that the poor man has passed through fearful danger, and is still in a helpless and suffering condition; he is therefore our brother. You have set me a good example by doing what you could for him, and I will now do whatever may be in my power; I have but few medicines, but those I have are such as are likely to be useful in cases of accident or of sudden fevers. Will you allow me to see him at once, therefore?"

"In the name of God, worthy stranger! Here, Abdallah (to his son, a stripling of fifteen, clad in a single garment, of which the most that could be said was that it was better than nothing), take the Hakeem to the Bey's tent, if indeed he be not asleep still."

Hamid, who had been anxiously expecting help as soon as he saw the English gentleman, was at the entrance, and reported his master to have awaked just now. "I told him," said he, "that there was a Frank stranger here, for he heard the noise and confusion, and was much alarmed at first, thinking he was tracked."

Mr. Freeman raised his eyebrows a little at this last remark. Could the Bey, as they called him,

be a man flying from justice? However, he would not hesitate to assist him if he were, and he stooped to enter the primitive chamber, formed by the black goats'-hair curtains hung to stakes fixed in the sand. Here, on the heap of skins and mats the woman had arranged for him, lay Zohrab, pale and feeble, but now perfectly conscious. He brightened on seeing the Englishman, though the fluent colloquial Arabic in which he addressed him evidently surprised him. He replied to the kindly greetings and questions as to his health, and then said he would relate the cause of his accident if he wished.

"I am better this evening," he said, "and can speak."

"Pardon me, but I must assume the character of doctor, for want of a better. I perceive you are much too weak to talk. Allow me to do all I can for you, and then if your servant," glancing to the door where Hamid was admitting the sheikh, "is able to give me a faithful account of it, I shall be delighted to hear of your adventure; the Bedouins gave so many versions, I can hardly comprehend the matter, but I can wait till, please God, you are better."

"My boy is honest, and can relate it just as it was," replied the invalid, holding out his hand for his new friend to feel his pulse.

The sheikh now came up, and as many of the older men as the tent could hold crammed in to

be present at the medical examination! It made the tent very close and hot, but Mr. Freeman knew it would not do to make the least objection; so he proceeded to examine the sufferer and administer what he thought best, maintaining as quiet a demeanour as possible, not to alarm him. When he had finished he went out, advising the group to follow him, and seating himself on his little carpet bag in the moonlight, with the sheikh beside him, squatted in the peculiar way that all who know desert Arabs are familiar with, and the rest of the men in a half circle round them, he answered the questions put by them as to the patient. He thought him in a very feeble state, but did not at all despair of his recovery if he were careful, and especially did not fret himself, but he was evidently uneasy in mind.

"But," continued Mr. Freeman, who did not want any more of their conjectures, "I wish the sheikh (turning towards him as he spoke) would order him some broth made as strong as they can; nothing would be better for him, if made without too much water. Milk is good also; but he needs both."

He knew that the tribe was a poor one by their tents and equipment, but was too well up in the ways of the country, and especially of Bedouins, to allude to the fact that the Bey was certain to reward them handsomely. Doubtless they knew it; but to do them justice, they would not have grudged a sick stranger

whatever he needed, without payment or reward, were he unable to give any.

"God will punish those who shot the handsome, good young man," observed the old woman, who had been his first nurse, and had remained his daily attendant with Hamid, and had seen something of his disposition, therefore. "He is gentle and kind, and his servant tells me all his slaves and servants love him greatly; and he has a beautiful wife, they say, who will die or become mad if he does not recover! God is great. May the blessing rest on the Hakeem, and may the enemies of the fair-eyed young man be consumed like fat in the flames!"

Having delivered this oration, the dame summoned her eldest son, and with the permission of the sheikh, went with several others to select a young kid, to be at once killed and made into broth. Though it was late they had no notion of obeying a Hakeem by halves. He had said the Bey must have broth; that he was very weak, and it was to be made strong and good; the primitive idea, therefore, was that there was no time like *now*, seeing the flock was at hand, and the moon bright. Many a doctor in civilised lands might in that respect have envied Mr. Freeman, for who could get a butcher's shop opened at night, still less a grazier applied to, for a lamb at midnight? The wild life, among many inconveniences, has no doubt *some* convenient things. In this case it was fortunate for Zohrab that a friend had come in

time to give both the medicine and soup ; for though he had had plenty of milk, the loss of blood had been so great that he needed more nourishment. However, a greater relief than that to the body awaited him. While some of the party were lighting a fire and others smoking, Mr. Freeman heard the whole adventure of the cane-field from Hamid, who thought he might even go back to the conduct of the wicked Ahmed in old times, and his master's suspicion of his being the instigator of the attempt on his life, because Zohrab had told him, in a whisper, after the Arabs quitted the tent, to tell the Frank gentleman "his name and everything." The countenance and manner of the clergyman, as well as his nation and his profession combined, gave confidence in one who had resided among English Christians, and he wished him to know everything ; but the Bedouins were not to know his name. Mr. Freeman was intensely interested, and nothing but the feeling of duty as a doctor *pro tem.* could have kept him from going to the Bey at once, to assure him of his deep sympathy. He talked to the assembled circle for a little while, as they were too much interested in the progress of the broth which the women were cooking, and in roasting and eating some fragments of meat for themselves, to go to sleep just then. But being tired with a long ride, he was glad soon to retire to a corner of one of the tents : and, wrapped in his own blanket (which he preferred to the venerable sheep-skin covering

kindly offered him, for very sufficient reasons), he was soon enjoying the refreshing sleep given by desert air, pure and invigorating as it is. No one who has not proved it can imagine the effect of that dry, clear atmosphere, especially on the sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BAPTISM BY NIGHT.

THE sun was sending beams of golden light, which seemed to stream over the sandhills, as the stranger awoke. The sounds of busy life returning to the camp had roused him, and he hastened to the well of somewhat brackish water which supplied them with drink and washing, though the last the Bedouins do not consider a necessary of existence. The Englishman, of course, made what toilet he could under difficulties, and then hastened to inquire after his patient, and found he had taken his broth at a very late hour, and soon afterwards slept, and was not yet awake. Mr. Freeman therefore took a delightful ramble among the sandhills and low rocks which cropped out here and there, a boy from the tents being his companion; for it is very easy to lose one's way in the desert, owing to the inequalities of the ground and the absence of landmarks. A shrill call summoned them back when the flocks had been milked, and some of their desert bread prepared, on which the traveller made his breakfast with thankfulness; and then the Bey being awake went to him,

and finding him a little easier, was able to talk to him, and even to ask a few questions, by which it came out that he had been in England.

"Do you understand English?" he asked.

The Bey replied in that language, though with some foreign accent. He was quite fluent, having lived several months with Irene's family.

"Let me talk English with you," he said, "for I have things to say I do not want them to hear outside, nor the boy within."

When once they had got into the subject of Zohrab's difficulties it was very hard to stop, and his friend was only aware of the length of their conversation when the pallid hue of the patient and the increased weakness in his voice warned him to insist on leaving him quiet. He had to administer a sedative draught before he could rest indeed, but after another long sleep he seemed again a little stronger, and sent Hamid for Mr. Freeman.

"I want you," said he, to answer me a question. Do you not still think me in danger of dying from this wound?"

"No; as far as I can judge, I think not," replied Mr. Freeman. "I am not a surgeon, indeed, but have studied the subject, and even taken some lessons on surgery, as being useful in case of emergency to a clergyman. With proper care, I think your recovery, humanly speaking, certain; and though you have not the degree of care I should desire, of course, yet, on

the other hand, the air of the desert is peculiarly strengthening; and at this season, when the great heats are over, the danger of inflammation is less, and your constitution appears to me good. Still, I allow that any accident or unforeseen fatigue might throw you back fatally."

"Or my enemies find me out and finish me," observed the Bey. "My dear friend, you have been so kind, and I feel so sure you are a true Christian—one I can rest upon for help and advice—will you refuse to baptise me privately?"

Mr. Freeman started, for he was hardly prepared for this request. After a pause he said:

"Zohrab Bey, do you consider, if you had been slain last week, that your soul would have been lost because you were unbaptised? *I* do not say yes or no; observe, I want your unbiassed opinion."

"I have no opinion, dear sir; I am still too ignorant to have opinions in these things, but I am quite *sure* God would have received me for Jesus Christ's sake, because I believe in Him. But if I live, whether for a week or for a long life, I know I ought to give myself by this sign to Christ, because He ordered His disciples about it; if it were *impossible* He would not punish me for impossibilities. But your coming here so unexpectedly, as if sent by God, shows me that it *is* possible, and therefore, my duty, if you agree."

"It is usual," said Mr. Freeman, after a minute's

thought, "to make baptism a *public* profession of the person's belief in Christ, or (in the case of young children) of the profession of their parents. And the prayers of the people are expected as well as those of the minister. At the same time there are exceptional cases."

"I think mine is one, dear sir," said the Bey, earnestly. "If I go home (supposing me to live), and then repair at once to the mosque, and proclaim my changed religion, they stone me directly, the mob I mean. If I go to my family and announce it to all my relatives and friends, some one among them or their servants will inform the Government, and I am then thrown into prison or else privately poisoned, or first imprisoned and then sent to the White Nile. My poor wife, young and delicate, is then left to die; and, perhaps, has not strength to avow her faith, though she believes as I do. Would it, sir, be wrong to remain with my views undeclared for a time?"

"Not if you are not forced to do or say anything actually opposed to Christian faith, I think," replied Mr. Freeman.

"I am not obliged to go to a mosque, or even to keep fast, or to make any declaration of belief in the Prophet. It is partly as a political matter, partly to gratify the bigotry of the fanatics, who are pretty numerous, that such severe measures are always (or have been hitherto always) taken with avowed con-

verts. But if I am asked plainly the question, 'Are you a Christian?' I will not sell my soul to Satan by telling so shameful a falsehood as to deny it. I only would desire, if it be not sinful, to remain quiet for a time, if it may be so. Islam is yet so powerful that those who really feel the system to be as a tree whose heart is rotten, dare not speak! There is no toleration, though I hope there will be one day. A man disappears, and when you ask, they say, 'He is gone, who can tell where?' or he falls sick, and they say, 'He dies of fever;' when it was really from poison, given, perhaps, by even a relative."

"I know of such cases, for I know the East well," replied Mr. Freeman. "I will think of this, and come to you again."

He left the neophyte then, but resolved not to delay his decision very long, for Zohrab's state would be much aggravated by anxiety of mind. So he went to a quiet spot among the rocks, and returned in an hour after prayer for guidance, and deep consideration of the case on all sides. Then returning to the invalid's tent, he found him, as he half expected, with a burning hand and flushed cheek, eagerly awaiting him.

"My brother," said Mr. Freeman, "under your strange and trying circumstances, I think it is right for me to admit you privately into the outward and visible church of Christ; that is, the faithful company of believers in his atonement and resurrection, you

being ready to promise that you will, as soon as possible, avow your faith; and, at all events, that you will never *deny* it."

"I am willing, the Lord being my helper," was Zohrab's reply.

"Then sleep now, if you can, and at night, when all is quiet, I shall administer the holy rite. I have told the sheikh I wish to sleep in your tent, which on every account indeed is desirable, as I see you are somewhat too excited for one in your state."

"Will you read before you go then; it will calm me more than medicine?"

Mr. Freeman read in his own tongue a chapter of the Gospel, and then some of the strains of the sweet singer of Israel, and left him dropping into calm slumber.

He took out his writing after supper. The Bedouins all being tired with their late hours the previous night, went to sleep, muffled in their mantles, outside the tents, or within, as suited them. It was a strange scene, and beautiful to look out upon; the moonbeams resting on the broken ground and touching the rocks with amber light, pale, but not cold (like northern moonlight); the black tents standing out against the deep purple blue of the starry firmament; the sleeping group near the embers of the watch-fire, their guns beside them, and the dogs and camels crouching near, and the wide expanse of desert dimly visible in the distance where the sand-hills did not intervene.

Robert Freeman gazed at it from the half-open curtain of the tent where he sat, with such fascination that his writing was neglected. (He had a lamp in the tent of the patient of course.) At last he thought the outer air was getting too fresh for the Bey, and closed the curtain. Hamid was outside by his master's desire; the tent being small, two persons to sleep in it were sufficient. At last the cock crew for the first time, and that being the hour at which sleep is usually heaviest with people in good health was he thought the least likely to be interrupted. He softly approached the lowly couch on which his friend lay; he had scarcely courage to awake him, though his sleep was rather troubled, as if the mind were struggling against the flesh; he turned slightly after a moment and murmured in his sleep. Mr. Freeman could just catch a few words—

"Do not fear, my life; they cannot hurt you! O Lord, pardon thy servant! I am sinful, but I believe. I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people!" (It was one of the Psalms he had heard just before dropping asleep).

Mr. Freeman gently touched his arm; he awaked to full consciousness at once; the sleep had been very light. He smiled and looked with a touching expression of peace on his face at the minister, who held a cordial draught to his lips, after which he seemed much revived.

"Shall I speak in English or in Arabic?" he asked.

"English, I understand fully, and if Hamid awoke he would interrupt us."

So Mr. Freeman asked him the few simple yet all-important questions. He could not reply in the words of a book, of course, but he gave the answers clearly and distinctly in his own words, and professed himself a believer in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as well as in the Father and the Holy Spirit. Then Mr. Freeman repeated the words of baptism, and poured the water on his head, and prayed for him; while Zohrab could not keep back his tears, for he was weak in body, and scarcely expected to live, but he smiled as, after all was over, his friend gave him the blessing and greeted him as a brother in the Lord. Then he would not let him try to speak more, and both lay down and soon fell asleep till morning.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WIFE'S JOURNEY.

THE time at which the Bey was expected home had long passed. He spoke of a few days, and it was now more than a week, but though sorry, neither the wife nor mother were alarmed. People are not often strictly punctual in the East. Zohrab, trained in a military school, was more so than many young men of his standing, indeed. But when the persons one has to deal with do not keep to their time it is impossible to carry on business punctually or speedily, and every one knows that in Egypt to have to sit waiting for one's neighbours is part of the daily life; to some a matter of perfect indifference, to others who know that life is short, and the night cometh when no man can work, it is a trial. Ain el Hayat had a source of double joy, spiritual and temporal, in the explanation given her by her husband, and therefore for some time felt too happy to be anxious, or even to be much chafed by the petty tyranny of her mother-in-law. It was a cause of indignation if she saw a smile on the face of the fair young Circassian. It seemed like a triumph over her plans. Time hangs rather heavy when one feels himself watched, so Ain el Hayat kept to her room and her books as much as possible.

Eurydice spent this week with her, and the fruit of Irene's instructions was proved in her. She had at first taking up her abode with her new-found relative two years before, thought it out of the question that she should at nearly sixty learn to read; but as her eyes were remarkably good, and her health strong, she was persuaded to try, and found she could learn very fairly. Irene taught her in Romaic, as she preferred thus to revive the tongue nearly forgotten of her childhood, but she learned texts in Arabic by heart to repeat to the poor and teach to children, and she knew the meaning well.

Instead of occasional visits, often at long intervals, as was the case with Ain el Hayat and her English friend, Eurydice had enjoyed the advantage of dwelling constantly with her, and no Christian, ignorant, but hungering for the word, can fail to profit by daily life with one who can say of it, "All the day long is my study in it; the law of thy mouth is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver." The old and the young woman spent hours therefore in reading and talking over the Scripture; and when Irene came to visit the hareem, and to recall her deaconess because a case of illness in the country greatly needed her care, she found them thus engaged, and felt deeply moved at the contrast, when thinking of the similarity in some points of their lot: both white slaves originally, both taken from their homes and without real friends for so long, one not even knowing the name

given her in infancy, nor in what position were those who gave her birth, but both had now been enabled to say:

"I have found a friend in Jesus;
Oh, how he loves!"

Like many other of our hymns she possessed it in Arabic, and used to sing it with Eurydice, whose voice was a little cracked and rough, but her ear was good, and she enjoyed taking a humble part in sacred song.

The twelfth day at last arrived since the Bey's departure, and it began to be feared he had fallen ill, and the secretary, a very intelligent young Syrian, was requested by a message from the Sitt to write to her son's steward; but the letter was scarcely ready for post when the steward himself arrived bringing the alarming news that the Bey had left them a long time before, on the intended day, in fact, and they all at the farm had imagined him safe at home, when a peasant had happened by a mere chance to meet one of the farm servants at a market, and had told him that on that very day (naming the date of the Bey's starting), a horse had been seen without a rider, and having crimson velvet housings, and chased by Bedouins. There was no mention of the dead ruffian; either he had been flung into the river or secretly buried to avoid suspicion by the neighbouring peasants, nor was there any news of the Bey himself. The peasant did not know he had been travelling, and merely named the report as a bit of country news. But the

steward set off at once and came to the city. The commotion caused by his story may be conceived, and the agitation of the poor mother and wife.

The secretary sent a messenger to Irene Hillyard telling what had occurred ; the messenger added that the ladies were going mad, which information was repeated (when Irene returned with him to Cairo a few hours later) by the sobbing negress who admitted her to the hareem.

But the lady knew the language of the East far too well to imagine that actual and real aberration of intellect was intended. She found poor Ain el Hayat in a sad state indeed ; for her mother-in-law had reproached her as the cause of her husband's death (for they not very unnaturally supposed him dead), as she said he had lost powerful friends by her making him affront the minister, whose brother's daughter he had declined as a bride, and that his cruel enemies, therefore, felt free to assassinate him !

She had locked herself in her room, poor little woman ! or rather in Zohrab's own little study, for her own had only a curtained door, and would admit no one till Irene appeared. After she had wept and sobbed till her friend felt it "exceeded," and would make her helpless, she took a mother's place and tried to be almost stern, till she obliged her to drink orange-flower water, and let her face be sprinkled ; when a little composed, she told her that she had seen her brother on the previous day, and they had

decided on sending the honest peasant Hassan, whose gratitude for his rescue from prison bound him to their interests, to the upper province at once by railway; he came from the country round Benesouef, himself, and knew all the villages about, and would excite less suspicion than a better dressed person. A clever lad of seventeen, from the Bey's own farm, was found to accompany him, and they had set off early this morning, for the train started at half-past nine. This had been done on their own authority, because, before the steward's arrival, Mr. Hillyard had felt uneasy about his friend's delay, and wondered at no steps being taken by his family. He hoped that the Bey might only have had a fall, and been hurt not even seriously, perhaps; at any rate the peasants were to inquire and search carefully all the villages round.

This plan, and the fact that the men must have actually crossed the steward on his way, relieved Ain el Hayat, and the mother was even more hopeful, so they were induced to take some food by Irene's entreaties, for every one had been fasting from sorrow. She then left them and went to her brother's house, with the promise to come whenever sent for.

On the third day, in the evening, the two peasants returned, and went straight to the Bey's house. It was eight o'clock only, but the place was quiet, and most of the slaves already asleep; their irregular habits being such that one day they would be up till

midnight, or even daylight, and the next, go to sleep (with the fowls) at sunset. However, the days being short, it was already dark at eight.

The boab desired a servant, whom he roused, to go to Mr. Hillyard's and bring the lady, and he would arouse the family, meanwhile; he heard the news first, of course, and finding it was good, was eager to let every one know as soon as possible. The Bey was not only alive, as we already know, but had been moved to the house of a sheikh, only an hour's ride from Benesouef. He was, however, very weak still, and could not yet travel; in fact they did not feel sure he would recover, but gave the best possible view of the case to the ladies when they were sent for to give their account to Osman, who duly transmitted it to them.

When Irene came, which she did as soon as a carriage could be obtained, she found there was a letter for her from Mr. Freeman. She was not personally acquainted with him, but had heard him mentioned by her step-mother once in a letter as a clergyman who had passed several years in the East, and was an excellent and agreeable man. They had met at some missionary assembly, and she and Clara had liked him much, and were quite sorry to hear he had been over-working in his parish, and was advised to go abroad for some months; they had no idea he was to go to Egypt, however. Mr. Freeman wrote to Mrs. Hillyard, not only as a confidential

friend of the Bey and his wife, therefore, but as a lady known to him by character already. He said that Zohrab had been almost well as to the wound a few days before, but remained weak, and seemed not to have got over the shock of the fall and the loss of blood; that he was wild to be moved to the coast, hoping to travel down to Cairo very soon, and as the Bedouins had exhausted their provender for the horses and cattle, they were equally desirous to be *en route* again; so his persuasions to delay a short time longer had been overruled; that they all had reached the sheikh's house, where they were quite safe, but the shaking and fatigue had told unfavourably on his patient's symptoms. He had found a tolerably expert surgeon belonging to the soldiers then quartered at Benesouef, whose opinion coincided with his own, and who advised a week or ten days of entire repose, after which he said, if fever did not set in, he would be all right; but Zohrab was frightened about himself, thought he was going to die; "and though," he wrote, "I believe he is too sincere a Christian to fear death for himself, he is in a great state of anxiety at the idea he may die, and not see the wife he seems so devoted to again. He told me to ask you to urge her to come to him, and if you can, I really feel it may make all the difference in his recovery. He is evidently so desirous of speaking to her, or it may be that he fears something I know nothing of. She is a Christian also as far as I under-

stand him. But you know Orientals are so little used to name their wives or speak of them to men friends, that I know nothing about his reasons, and only tell you the *fact*. Bring or send the young lady if you can." Mr. Freeman did not mention the baptism; he could not be *perfectly* sure the letter might not go astray, so he wrote with some degree of caution, though Hassan appeared simple and honest, and spoke with the utmost respect of his dear lady, who had pitied his afflictions and dried the tears of his wife and children he said.

When Irene read the letter she was a little puzzled how to act at first. She knew that the journey was not very long or very fatiguing, and that any English wife, mother or sister would start off by the morning's train without a moment's hesitation, but to an Eastern lady it was another matter; it was not want of love, but she was unused to hasty journeys, or to acting on *emergencies*, which require that the mind should be made up and the preparations hurried in a brief space of time. The notion of starting by a railway (still looked on by the older women of *close* hareems, or those which kept up the strictest customs of seclusion, as a Frank innovation), and then riding on rough peasant donkeys across the fields in a part of the country they had never visited, and without due thought and long preparation even, would *scare* them dreadfully, and Sitt Fatmeh would most likely forbid her daughter-in-law to go; besides, if she knew there was a Frank man in the sheikh's house it would be worse; he

might *see* the lady (veiled of course), but still it would not be what Sitt Fatmeh approved in any way.

Irene, however, soon made up her plan, and finding a black girl lying on a mat, ready dressed as is their way, soon roused and sent her to fetch Osman Aga, who was smoking a pipe with the peasants down stairs, and enjoying a dish of gossip on village affairs from them after having heard all they could tell of his master's state. They had given the best view, but besides their wish to comfort the family, they really were not aware of the depression that possessed the Bey ; and it was a good thing, for the alarm would have spread like wild-fire.

"Now, Osman Aga," said Irene, as the sooty functionary made his appearance at the door of a small room, where she had established herself while the ladies were drinking coffee and crying alternately in another apartment, "Now, Osman Aga, you are a sensible man. Listen. You know I have a letter from the English gentleman ?"

"The doctor, Sitt Irene, or rather they say he is a kaseess" (priest or religious minister of the Christians), "and not a doctor ; but he is clever and good, Hassan tells me, and loves my dear lord so much, Allah the All-wise and Powerful bless him !"

"Well, Osman Aga, this good man writes that although he hopes your master is not so bad as he fancies himself—being weak, you know—yet to cross his wishes may hurt him."

"Who dares cross his wishes ?" said the aga.

"No one can, if you and Sitt Ain el Hayat will agree to what he wants. He wants his wife to come to him directly—to-morrow morning."

"Sitt Fatmeh will never allow it. What can I do? I dare not cross her; and I do not like to cross him. But you see, Sitt Irene, our ladies are not like your frangees. People would cry out if my young lady went about like a common person in that way."

"Look you, Osman Aga, if I find her willing, and that I go with her and take the nurse Amneh, would you go with us?"

"Sitt Fatmeh!" whispered the negro, shaking his head, "*I* am ready, but what can we do with *her?*"

"You shall go and bring two black silk *habaras*" (the large mantle worn by citizens' wives of respectability over their dress) "and a carriage early in the morning, and take us both in that disguise to the railroad."

"Sitt Fatmeh will not allow it," he replied; "but I will procure the habaras.'

Irene was afraid her scheme would fail, but fortune favours the brave. She dismissed the aga, telling him she would see next day what could be done, and begged him to name it to no one meanwhile.

After a troubled sleep, she rose very early and went into the anteroom, but found no one except a slave, who told her Sitt Fatmeh had ordered a carriage at daybreak, and had driven off to her daughter's hareem to tell her that her brother was alive. Her husband

would have gone to Zohrab Bey, of course, the slave added, but he was absent from home. The Sitt meant to stay all day with Sitt Nezleh, and was vexed that her daughter-in-law refused to accompany her, but she had cried all night almost, and wished to sleep in the morning. This was just what her friend could have wished for, and after she had taken her coffee she went to the young lady's room, and found her awake, and very glad to see and talk with her.

"I am rested now, dear Sitt Irene; but I *was* so tired two hours ago, and I dread my sister-in-law's talk; she never stops speaking! Oh, that I could but see my dear lord again! Do you think he will get well soon?"

Irene saw she had no idea of danger, and feared to frighten her; yet if she had not some real fear it would be difficult to get her to break through hareem customs. It is not that whole troops of ladies and slaves do not go by train occasionally when a family move is necessary; some go every year even to Constantinople, if they are Turkish families. But a sudden journey, in which it would not be possible to take a number of slaves, and still more, when they meant to go to the house of a village sheikh whose hareem would be a single room occupied by his wife or wives, and with none of the arrangements usual for Eastern women of high position, was shocking to her at first, and when Irene proposed it she opened her eyes wide with amazement at so outrageous a plan.

"I must tell you the truth, dear sister," she then said, "and read out of the letter the part about the Bey's own feelings, and his desire to see his wife, if Sitt Irene would bring her to him at once, with his nurse and Osman Aga.

"Oh, I will go; I will not lose a single moment! she then exclaimed, wiping the tears that began to flow again. "Thank God my mother-in-law is away; I do not think I could go if she were here; she would lock the doors. Call Osman Aga and Amneh and let us arrange at once!" and with no loss of time they were summoned; for the train went at half-past nine, and it was already eight o'clock. But Osman had been faithful, and got the habaras very early. When he received the order for the carriage it occurred to him that the old lady's absence made her daughter-in-law mistress for the day, and that love and the English lady's support might induce Ain el Hayat to agree to take the journey. So, equipped as two citizen's wives, they were conducted to the station in a carriage, with the nurse and Osman, and the peasant Hassan as guide to the village, and were shortly on their way to Benesouef, whence they must ride on donkeys to the village, where the invalid was. Mrs. Hillyard had adopted the native garb on this occasion, that she might the better protect her young friend, and also avoid the observation likely to be excited if the young mistress were seen driving off with the Frank lady.

The railway journey was uneventful, and not very long; by the asser (afternoon) they descended, and were taken into the small waiting-room at the station, the aga standing to guard the door while they partook of some provisions which Amneh had hastily put up in a large muslin handkerchief, which supplies the place of our bags and baskets, with Oriental ladies and slaves.

By the time they were ready to start, the donkeys awaited them, and assuming their face-veils again, they mounted and rode across country through the maize, and cotton, and cane-fields for about an hour; then Hassan said that they were quite near the place, and pointed to a large but poor and straggling village of mud-huts, with a small mosque at one end, in a grove of palms, and near the middle a white-washed house, mean enough (but very conspicuous among huts), which, he said, was the sheikh's abode. They soon arrived, and the ladies were quickly taken in (to avoid the crowd of wondering children, who instantly assembled); up a narrow staircase of mud-brick they followed the aga. Hassan remained below with the owner of the house. The upper story consisted of two tolerably large, though very rude, chambers, with an anteroom, or corridor, open to the sky, between them. In this a large mat was spread, and it was used evidently as the chief sitting-room for most part of the year. A woman sifting corn and a couple of children playing about were its only occupants. Irene

whispered to the aga, and he went to the open door where she had spied the figure of a European man.

"He knows Arabic," she said; "Hassan told me so. Tell him to go down for a little, as the lady is come."

Mr. Freeman accordingly disappeared, with great celerity, by another door, and Osman preceded his mistress to the Bey's room. Irene then divested herself of her cumbrous disguise, and leaving the slaves to wait in the corridor, went down in search of her countryman, and they mutually introduced themselves, and talked over the case of their poor friends. Irene was surprised and delighted that the Bey had advanced so much as to wish to be enrolled in a Christian church; and Mr. Freeman rejoiced scarcely less to find that the wife was also a pilgrim to the heavenly city. He told Mrs. Hillyard that he wished to return to Cairo, having been detained (though most willingly and thankfully indeed) long beyond his intended time, and that friends were expecting him. "Besides, I shall be in the way here," said he; "I am going off, therefore, if you can stay, by the down-train which will come to Benesouef, in two hours. So I shall take one of your steeds back. My plan is to send a dahabeeyeh for our friend, and let him descend the river quietly, as soon as he can bear to be carried to the shore."

Irene then gave him her brother's address, and asked him to call on the secretary of the Bey, who

would explain everything (a letter had been left with him when the ladies started, asking him to tell Sitt Fatmeh that the Bey was in some danger, and had insisted on his wife joining him). But no one who had the honour of the worthy lady's acquaintance envied the secretary his task; true, he would not *see* her, but from behind the curtain he would *hear* her, and angry they all knew she would be; all the more that her heart yearned to be with her son herself all the time. But it was not the custom of the country to hurry off to dying relatives, however dear, and custom's chain was too strong for old hands to break. Had her temper been more yielding and gentle neither her daughter-in-law nor her English friend would have set off without communicating with her, but they knew it would make a scene, and therefore acted as seemed best in the emergency.

CHAPTER XXII.

ONE IN CHRIST.

WHETHER it was the happiness of having his wife's presence once more, or that rest had done its work, the Bey recovered rapidly from the very day after the arrival of the ladies. It was a new life for the fair Circassian, brought up in idleness, though by nature of a lively energetic turn ; to nurse her husband, dependent for some of his daily comforts on her white delicate hands. She would hardly allow his good old nurse to do anything that it was in her own power to do, and developed a marvellous skill in making little delicacies for the invalid. This is indeed an accomplishment often found among the white slaves, but his mother had been rather jealous during the only illness Zohrab had had since their marriage, and would not let her do anything ; she was, in fact, for the first time, able to hold a wife's position (according to the ideas of Europeans), and her English friend was charmed to watch her, when the passage door was screened off by mats hung across, and further guarded by Osman from without, going about unveiled, her trailing dress drawn up through a

sash, and her hands white with flour, or busy roasting pigeons over a tiny fire of charcoal. In the evening, when the invalid was better, the two ladies sat beside his sofa, and they read the Scriptures and talked. In one of these conversations when Zohṛab was almost strong enough to be moved to the ḍahabeeh, which was awaiting him at Benesouef, he told his wife of the baptism. She was at once rejoiced and alarmed, but soon felt satisfied he was right, and professed her willingness to follow in his steps whenever he should tell her that it seemed right.

After nearly ten days had passed there was no possible hindrance to their return; the railway would even have been no longer too fatiguing, but the long ride previous was thought bad, and besides, he enjoyed the idea of a few quiet days on the Nile with Ain el Hayat. He pressed Irene to go down with them, but as she could now be spared, she preferred hastening home by the short route. On her arrival she prepared the way as far as possible with the mother-in-law, calling to report of the Bey, and explain that he had been in a state in which to thwart him might have done serious injury. So when the family were together again the next week, matters went pretty smoothly, and life went on apparently as before. Not *really*, for the two who had begun to drink of the well of eternal life, could never be as before. And the mother, much more than they, was full of secret uneasiness, knowing by longer experience the ins and outs

of oriental envy and malice, and how, if one plan fails another is tried.

Her son had, on his recovery, written to some officials and seen others, but a good deal of time had been lost during his helpless state; for the peasants in the neighbourhood of the place where he had been attacked had been bribed (Ahmed was not well off, but a few purses of gold go far among very poor men); moreover, he had contrived to make himself useful to a half brother of Zohrab's, a young lad with neither talent nor good character, whose mother had always hated Sitt Fatmeh, and was intensely jealous of her still. By services in some money matters he ingratiated himself with these two easily enough; the rival wife, though both had been long widows, was a yet more willing tool than the boy, who, however, was aware of being the next in succession, if Zohrab died, as he had neither uncles nor children. *

Through interest and bribery, therefore, the matter dropped, without proper investigations being made, and the mother well knew that as no one had been caught, an enemy was somewhere at large.

Mr. Freeman had been on the Nile with a party of friends all this time. He had seen Mr. Hillyard previously, and explained to him that he had been induced to confer the rite of Christian baptism on the man they were both so much interested in,

* In the East the uncle takes a much larger share of inheritance than the sons, unless the father provides specially for them.

though he confessed it might seem rash, as he knew personally so little of him. "But," he said, "the strong feeling Zohrab had at the time of being near death, or, at any rate, in great danger, and his earnest desire for the baptism, with the clear and humble profession he made of faith, were strong reasons for departing from the usual custom; and besides, he had heard from the unconscious Nubian, who had served him long, such a testimony to the Bey's life at home, and also in his sojourn in Europe, that altogether he had felt impelled to act as he had done. "But," added he, "if ever he goes back, I shall reproach myself severely."

"I do not expect it," said Edmund Hillyard; "but there are breakers ahead, and it is not all who stand firm in the day of trial. I shall let you know on your return how matters are going on, and we must not forget that in the case of a wealthy and rising man, there is nothing to gain and all to lose in a worldly point of view. In India there are, I believe, occasionally some poor men who have to be supported or found employment if they join the Christian church, and whose great poverty may possibly make it an inducement; though even there, I should imagine, the risk and persecution were great; but here, where the English have no power (it may one day be different, but I speak as things now are), the poor man gains nothing, and the rich man loses much, so that hypocrites have no temptation. I am certain Zohrab Bey

is no hypocrite; his face and words agree with his character, and show an honest, frank nature; and he has had singular advantages in being with your family in England so long. No, Mr. Hillyard, I do not doubt his sincerity; it is perseverance in time of danger that I fear may be wanting, for he is wrapped up in his wife, who your sister tells me is so beautiful and devoted to him, and he clings to his home and mother, his friends and position, as most would do, no doubt, in his place. We must not look forward too much, but pray earnestly for him."

So the Englishmen parted, and we return to the hareem, where the curtain was withdrawn on this day to admit the lively daughter of Sitt Fatmeh, who was come to salute her mother and Ain el Hayat on the occasion of the lesser festival, as it was called, just before the great fast of the Moslems.

This year the fast fell in the cool season and short days, and consequently the trial of fasting from sunrise to sunset, without even a drop of water, would be much less than when it comes in summer. Possibly on this account, or for some other reason, Sitt Nezleh was in very high spirits, and kept her mother laughing and the slaves giggling and grinning, as she sat sipping her coffee.

"Ha, Morgiana you have made the coffee doubly strong, as I told you, because to-morrow—none all day! (with a comical gesture). Well, we must be

merry while we can. I hope you have a dainty dinner for me. Mother, I must tell you what I saw as we drove along. One of those dervishes was sitting in the street, a dirty, ragged creature, with hardly rags enough to cover him; and as they have, you know, very long hair, well, I saw a handsome boy, mashallah, a Pasha's son one might truly see, dressed in the Frank way, only with a tarboush. He was riding a nice little donkey, and attended by a servant; and as the women, boys, and some men too, who passed, stopped to kiss the hand of the holy man, he looked up expecting the young gentlemen to do the same, and called out, 'Come, my son, and kiss my hand.' The young lad smiled good-humouredly, but shook his head."

"Ah, you are a Christian!" cried one of the passers-by (with a naughty word). "Come *you*, and kiss my hand," continued the dervish, holding up his dirty palm towards the servant, who had a turban, and appeared a Moslem.

"No, no, I am a Christian too!" the man replied hurrying after his master.

"He is balked!" said one of the men near laughing.

Then some of the peasant women, going along with their baskets of *gilleh* (fuel of the poor, made of manure dried in the sun), stopped and took his head in their arms and kissed it.

Ain el Hayat gave a look of undisguised aversion.

"How can any one suppose that such dirty creatures are holy?" said she, "or that God, who loves purity, can be pleased with them for not using water, which is called the gift of God?"

"It is true that *I* prefer the white dervish," said her sister; "that holy man, who always wears white garments, and has a veil on his turban when he goes out of doors, that no women may see his face (he never sees any woman except his own wife and family, I am told), but people go to kiss his feet as well as his hands, he is so holy; but he is peculiarly clean; some of the little princesses went to kiss his feet, and his robes were quite beautiful. That is a better sort of holiness than dirt and matted hair."

"Daughter!" said her mother reprovingly, "all are holy men; there are different kinds of holiness, but all are followers of the prophet, and to be honoured as such."

"Are you going to keep fast, sister?" asked Nezleh of Ain el Hayat.

"No; my husband has never allowed me since our marriage; he thinks it not good for my health."

"Dear sister, that is wrong; though he *is* my brother I must say it; why it is God's command, and we ought to fast therefore, and you are not ill now."

"My lord says it is the command of man and not of God,' replied the Circassian gently.

"You need not talk to Ain el Hayat about those things," said her mother-in-law, knocking the ashes

out of her pipe with a pettish air; "she is almost a Christian. When the Mollah was reciting yesterday (the blind man, you know, who comes to us at festivals) she actually said she was tired, and went away to her room."

Ain el Hayat blushed crimson but made no answer, and presently the arrival of sweetmeats made a diversion, and the visit ended peaceably.

Everything went on quietly indeed for several weeks after this, and Sitt Fatmeh began to hope her son's enemy was gone away, or that he *might*, in a peasant's disguise, have been the slain man, for she did not hear the name of Ahmed Mohammed now anywhere, but somehow she was afraid to ask.

At last the month of Ramàdan, or the great fast, was over; it had fallen in our month of November that year. The winter had come; the fresh, pleasant Egyptian winter, when oranges hang ripe on the trees, and sugar-canes in camel loads are seen daily entering the city, with their rich purple stems and waving green leaves; when the emerald clover begins to spread over the fields, and the young lambs and kids appear among the flocks, and "green things" are abundant upon the earth. In the windy days indeed the milk-woman will observe that "the world is cold!" as her blue cotton or linen robe flutters about her bare legs; and the delicate hareem lady (more chilly in her large stone-flagged lofty mansion than the active peasant on foot half the day) will don her fur-lined jacket and

sit crouched among her cushions, till the sun comes out again. But, except at night, when occasionally there is really sharp cold, there is, as far south as Cairo, nothing to cause real suffering from wintry weather; and though many of the peasants say they prefer summer, they appear very cheerful in December and January also.

It was on a fine January day, cold and clear, with that bright look and brisk feeling about everything that is so exhilarating to mind and body, that Zohrab Bey, now in his full strength again, and looking particularly important and haply a little mysterious also, came to his wife's room.

"Now, my love, I am going to take you a visit, or at least" (for she looked more startled than pleased, not for want of affection, but because husband and wife never go out together among Moslems), "I am going to send you, with one of your women, to the house of Sitt Irene's sister-in-law. She had due notice, and all will be arranged. I shall meet you there."

Ain el Hayat knew that this visit was already thought of, but was nervous about it, and looked pale and anxious.

"My dear one," said he, "if your feeling is against it, I will not urge you; but I have said before no other time may be possible. The English minister is going away; I do not like to have our affairs in any stranger's power. He is my friend, and I trust him.

He will make no noise about it; and you have known Sitt Irene and Sitt Esther so long you will feel at ease with them."

"I wish to be a Christian, and I do believe, only I am afraid of the people," whispered Ain el Hayat, clinging to his arm; "but I *will* not fear, with Jesus to protect me."

He led her gently to the doorway, and summoned Osman to mount the box of the carriage and drive with his lady. No slaves from the women were needed; it was only known that she was gone to visit Mrs. Edmund Hillyard, which she had once done before.

They had prepared the drawing-room by putting a large screen in the middle, and the little party were waiting. The Bey was received by the master of the house and the clergyman, Mr. Freeman. The ladies conducted their muffled visitor behind the screen, and the service of baptism was read while she remained there; only at the moment of baptism Irene and Esther led her to the opening, still veiled, of course, to receive the water on her head. She withdrew again immediately, and the service was concluded as it began, with the person most concerned out of sight. But though the Bey had lived long enough in Europe to get rid of many old prejudices himself, he felt it would be wrong to let his young wife be laid open to the suspicion of boldness and want of due decorum from all around her, and therefore respected the

customs which he secretly thought as foolish as they were inconvenient.

They were refreshed both body and soul by their kind Christian hosts, and the fair Ain el Hayat kissed the English ladies very affectionately as they bade her farewell, and told them they must now always speak of her as *sister*, "for I am your sister in Christ now."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FEAST.

A CERTAIN trio were holding counsel one day in a house by the side of the river, at Boulac. The latticed window looked out on the water, now not quite at its fullest, but yet in great beauty, and studded with the little white sails of the fishing boats, and some larger from the merchant or passenger dahabeeychs, going towards the upper province, with a brisk, favourable wind. The great suspension bridge, with the soldiers coming and going, and the laden camels and asses ; and the road leading towards the Gezireh Palace, with its avenue of dark, shady lebich trees were visible, and made a cheerful view ; but the party were too much occupied to be looking out of window. The chief person was a lady, wrapped closely however, in the common dark-blue mantle of a peasant or poor artizan's wife. She was veiled with the black mask or face-veil of the Arab women, of not the highest class, and used by the poorest also. This dress was only assumed to avoid remark, as persons of her position, even when elderly, as she was, do not usually allow men to visit them; and if

any visitor should call, she could easily run into the next room unnoticed as a servant, &c.

Her companions were, her son, a heavy looking youth of fifteen or more, and the old enemy of Zohrab, Ahmed Mohammed. They were deep in conversation, and it seemed the man had been relating something.

"Yes, as I told your Honour, there are suspicions about him already. What you told the minister through his sister and mother has not been lost, for I heard him speak quite in a different tone from formerly about him. I shall find out if he is turned Christian really," said he, and "if so;" he then shrugged his shoulders.

"But it is impossible," said the youth; "my brother would never be so foolish; he must recollect the man—what was the dog's name who went over to the Christians two years ago, and was imprisoned on bread and water? then he was let out because the Franks made such a fuss; but he recanted, and saw his mistake afterwards, or else, I suppose, he would have been killed.

"I know it is true, and it will all come out some day; I have had him watched. I am only waiting the right moment. Why, who will inherit if he is out of the way?"

"Ha, ha!" said the lady; "we all know that, and Alee will only get his due, for he was kept out of his right shares. When their father died, they all pretended it was right, but *I* knew better, and I will be revenged on that woman; may her father—"

"Stop, Sitt Ayesha! For the prophet's sake don't be rash by thy words. See now; let us to business, and not lose time."

She was at once calm, and stooping down, held her head so as to catch what he said in a lower voice than before.

"I may then depend on you," she said, at last. "Ay, I see that I may. Here, write a paper for him, Alee; but take care my son, only what I tell thee;" for the woman knew her son was not very much up in business matters of that nature, and feared his committing himself."

She could not read or write, but was shrewd and full of cunning, and dictated a few words suitable to her purpose, which her son wrote and sealed with a silver engraved seal he wore, and then she handed some money to her accomplice, for, as will be readily surmised, they were plotting against Zohrab, who stood, as the stepmother thought, between her son and the estates of the father, who had, in fact, not left but given them to his eldest son on his marriage. The younger child, who was very young at that time, was sufficiently provided for, but not so amply. This covetous woman and the enemy of Zohrab, once acquainted, naturally became accomplices, for neither had any scruples as to the *means*, provided they could escape detection and gain their ends.

"There is to be a wedding in their family before long," said Ahmed, presently, after he had put away

the paper ; "there could not be a better opportunity for getting Zohrab into betraying himself, if only I can see some of the young men who attend the feast beforehand."

"His friends will not hear anything against him : he is so popular with them," said Ayesha.

"Yes ; but Sitt Ayesha, there are crowds at a wedding, you know, and the bridegroom's family and acquaintance do not, I think, know much of the Bey. It is his sister's daughter who is to be married ; it is rather sudden, and the grand feast is to come off very soon. I will do something ; you will know in time. So now I will take leave of your Honours ;" and saluting them with that courteous and deceitful smile which his face always wore when he wished to be especially pleasant, he took leave.

"I hope," said the youth, "he is not going to murder Zohrab ; I don't love him, certainly, but we should only get into trouble and be suspected. If he makes them imprison him, or banish him, it would be good."

"Who wants anything more, foolish boy ? Let him be banished in good earnest this time, and you get the estate, and I am content ;" and the lady retired to the inner apartments, while her hopeful son sallied forth to his usual evening diversions of gambling or other revelling, with his companions in folly.

Meanwhile, the hareem of Zohrab Bey was once more in commotion, but now, with cheerful bustle and

excitement, as the slaves were preparing their ladies' new dresses to go the next day to the house of the Sitt Nezleh, whose little thirteen years old daughter was going to be married!

According to custom, the ladies were to spend the three days of rejoicing, as they are called, at the bride's house; the third day they all were to drive along with her to the dwelling of the bridegroom. Formerly the procession was made on foot or riding on donkeys, but carriages have for many years past been used in Egypt, except by the poor; and, in consequence, the wedding processions have lost most of the picturesque and curious effect which they had, and which is now only to be found in the country marriages, or among quite the humblest class in town.

The grandmother, of course, was in her glory on the occasion; Ain el Hayat felt rather flat about it, for her mind was now so much developed, that she saw things more in their real light than others; still old habit, aided by her gentle and kindly disposition, enabled her to play her part fairly, and give all the proper salutations and congratulations. The third evening at length arrived, and the convoy, which blocked the streets for a long way, set out with men running before, carrying torches, and the chariots "jostling one another," recalling the passage in the prophet Nahum.

The bride, completely concealed from view by a red

shawl of thin cashmere hiding the entire face, eyes and all, was in the foremost carriage with mother, grandmother, and aunt; the rest followod. The gentlemen of families and their acquaintance were assembled at the bridegroom's house in the salamlik and court, which was curtained over with richly coloured and embroidered tent hangings, such as are always hired on these occasions, and hung with lamps in profusion. The door was crowded with inferior guests, for whom chairs and benches had been provided, and who were drinking coffee and smoking. The black hareem servants made all stand back as the carriages drew up, and they formed a line on each side to keep off the spectators, as the veiled and muffled figures descended and rapidly passed through the archway into the passage, and disappeared under the hareem curtain. The marriage ceremony had been performed quite privately with only certain relatives and the Mollah present. The "rejoicings" alone are public in oriental, or at least in Mahommedan weddings. The music bears a prominent part. Hired singers of supposed talent in their art perform, with the native instruments as accompaniment; and the Egyptians are certainly extremely fond of music in their own way, though the absence of harmony makes it soon wearisome to persons of cultivated musical tastes. Coffee and sherbet are almost the only things offered, except sugar-plums sometimes. The crowd of mixed visitors leave by degrees about midnight, but a great number

are invited to the feast, and these stay nearly or quite the whole night, the supper being rarely served till twelve or one o'clock, and lasting a considerable time. Instead of one large table, a number of small low round Eastern tables are placed on the floor with trays full of dishes, savory and sweet, upon them, and one set of guests after another is served, the remains being carried to the servants below afterwards. The gentlemen usually are feasted first, but also in several parties, unless the family be modernized enough to have set up a larger table in the salamlik, which was the case here, not for the ladies, but for the male guests. The liberally piled dishes of immense size were borne by the slaves and servants, and placed on the table. The guests, pushing up their coat sleeves, set to work in earnest, for most had not eaten since noon, except a few nuts and comfits. Those who were in the European garb, so nearly universal among the higher class of men, looked rather droll with their fingers in the rice, or tearing fowls limb from limb. But the older merchants and scribes, who still wore their rich and tasteful costume with its loose sleeve, were more in character, and seemed quite at ease, and not troubled with formality. Some rolled their sleeves back as a lady does who is about to make a pie, and boldly plunged their fists into the snowy piles of rice and attacked the delicious roast lambs stuffed with pistachios and raisins, like men who were not ashamed of their good appetites and primitive habits.

When the meal was over, and the hands duly washed, the inevitable smoking began again, and the music and singing were resumed at intervals. It was during one of these pauses, when the singers were doubtless eating and resting themselves, that a young man who was sitting near Zohrab Bey asked some questions on politics, to which he replied in a guarded way, as the man was nearly a stranger. But he persevered, taking a religious turn, not exactly as a devout man (it was pretty well known that he cared for no religion very seriously), but trying to show that the religion of Islam was so mixed with all their politics, that no one could be a true Egyptian or a true Turk if he were leagued with Europeans, or held any of their views. He ignored the fact (perhaps really did not know it), that Christianity arose in the East, and seemed to imply, at any rate, that the Copts must have got their views from Europe, while the Franks he abused as a set of detestable infidels. Some, especially the older guests, agreed with him, others laughed, and some droll remarks were made by one or two who had lately visited Paris, and whose idea of *Christian* society was drawn from the most worldly and fast circles of that city. But the young man who first spoke had an intention that no one except a comrade or two of his own guessed at, and instead of letting the subject drop, he artfully drew on Zohrab into an argument, and at last pushed him, as it were, into a corner by declaring that it was well known

he had turned Christian when in Europe a year ago. Of course neither this man nor Ahmed (who had primed him beforehand) had any idea of the private baptism, but by some means they had learned several things, small in themselves, but which, put together, led them to think that he had given up the faith of his fathers, or if not absolutely, that he had no attachment to it, so they might set him in a bad light with the minister, who had given him the office he held, because it happened that the minister in question was an old and very bigoted man. Zohrab made no reply, but shrugged his shoulders, as if to say it was no business of theirs.

"Ah, ah, he cannot deny it," said his opponent.

"You talk nonsense," replied another. "Zohrab Bey, say the *fatthah*, and stop his mouth at once."

Zohrab could of course have done so, but he felt *that* would be a distinct falsehood as he now was, and therefore refused, only saying, however, that a feast of rejoicing was not the time for such talk. After a little more urging on the part of several of the more religious Moslems present who thought it desirable he should stop the others in that way, the matter was left, for the music began to call attention again, and no more was said. Very few thought of it again, it was just an argument, and no more; but the emissary of Ahmed gained his point, which was to have witnesses, if needed, that

Zohrab had declined to repeat the Moslem formula ("There is but one God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God") called the Fatthah.

He went the next morning to the minister to whose department the Bey officially belonged, and reported boldly that he was a Christian. Abderrahman Bey, for that was his name, at first refused to believe them, but was at last induced to send for Zohrab and question him in private. He would not then deny the truth, and confessed that he believed in Christianity; but, he added, there was a professed toleration in the country, that many Copts, and even Europeans were employed in various offices, and that so long as he did not interfere with the state religion, it was no business of any one to interfere with his thoughts and views.

The minister sat stroking his long beard in silence for a few minutes; he was pondering the case. Had it been a poor man he would at once have thrown him into prison till he either died or recanted. A man in the Bey's position, with powerful connections, was different, and having no witnesses of his having been baptized (only of his refusal to repeat the fatthah) made a difference. He desired him to send in a formal resignation of his situation, and said he should then communicate with his colleagues and consider what should be done. He was very angry, but did not give much vent to his feelings, while considering what to do. Ahmed's

friend was a scribe in the office of the minister, and lost no time in telling him what had passed, and added, if anything should happen to Zohrab they will not be sorry, but will say, "All right."

Sitt Fatmeh and her daughter-in-law had not yet returned, though the festival itself was over. Nezleh had pressed them to stay to the end of the week, (two days more only), at her house, to console her for her daughter's absence as she would feel lonely at first without her. Ain el Hayat was very unwilling to be absent from her husband, but he begged her to gratify his sister, and she agreed to stay, therefore. His mother sent the greater part of her slaves back, and told the nurse Amneh to be careful of her master's comfort, and on no account to let any one but herself make his coffee.

He returned home, and the following day was sent for to the minister, as related. He was half inclined to go straight to his sister's, and tell what had passed to his wife, but on second thoughts decided, as it was but one day more, to wait till she returned. He called on Mr. Hillyard, but did not find him at home, and being very tired with the festivities of yesterday, went early home to sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THUS FAR AND NO FARTHER.

THE Greek deaconess Eurydice was busy at the farm, in her quiet, useful occupations two days after the festival at Sitt Nezleh's, of which she had heard through the servants, and been invited to attend, but declined; for she cared for nothing of that kind. She was engaged in preparing bandages and herbs for an injured leg of some peasant in the neighbourhood, and was sitting in the court-yard to have the warmth of the sun, as the air was rather chilly in the rooms. She looked younger rather than older, though nearly two years had passed since Irene had rescued her from slavery, both of mind and body. The calm, happy look on her face was very different from the stolid coldness of former days; and she was so cheerful, as well as kind, in her words of sympathy to the poor or sick, that she was now not only respected, but loved. While she sat thus in the court, she was suprised by the sound of donkey's-feet on the stone steps at the gate, and looking up saw Hamid the Nubian riding in.

"Why, Hamid, you here? Have you any message

from my lady or the Bey that you come in such haste?" for his steed was quite heated she saw.

"Sitt Ain el Hayat begs you to come; the Bey is ill." And he then detailed rapidly the chief symptoms of his master, and, shaking with sobs as he spoke, urged her to lose no time.

"You have a doctor?" she said, going to a box which she unlocked while speaking.

"Sitt Fatmeh came home at once when she found he was ill, and sent for the man who had attended the Bey's father, a Moslem doctor. The Bey wanted the German, who is said to be clever. I think he dislikes this man; he is a very strong Moslem, and you know, Sitt Irene, some of those don't like my dear lord, because he is so fond of Christians."

"Ah! I understand, my son," she said, taking a small bundle in her hand.

"Yes, yes, I see how it is; only, if he have not drunk too much there is yet time; the action is not so quick as some."

"The cup was only half empty, I know," said the boy who fully understood his master to have been poisoned.

"Thank God! Now let us ride as fast as we can." The distance was shorter than at the autumn season, and they reached Cairo in little more than two hours, though at some seasons it was double. However, they galloped part of the way. They were conducted silently up-stairs, and went straight to the apartment of Ain el Hayat, who came to meet them, pale and

trembling, but composed herself by a great effort, and said, in a whisper, "I have no faith in that doctor; he is stupid, or else—I do not know what I say! Eurydice, come in at once, my sister, and see my lord!"

The Greek stood looking at the Bey for some instants, and then asked him two or three questions as to his symptons. He replied, speaking distinctly, though in great pain and very much exhausted. She then took hold of his hand and felt it, and afterwards signed to the wife and friend to come into the next room with her (his mother was holding his head and bathing his forehead with vinegar).

As soon as they were out of hearing, Eurydice said, "He has been poisoned!"

Ain el Hayat sank on the ground, almost fainting, and Irene, fearing she would lose consciousness threw some water quickly on her face; she then roused herself, sat up rocking herself to and fro, and groaning.

"Hush! said Eurydice; do not let him hear you; do not let him know what it is. By God's grace, I think I have here what may cure him, an antidote, if the poison is what I believe, and that he has not taken it too long, or in a large quantity. Now call Hamid!"

She spoke with authority, quite unlike her usual quiet, gentle manner, for she saw there was no time to lose in fears and lamentations. The Nubian was

not far off, and though he was not admitted into the hareem, he was allowed to stand at the curtained entrance to answer her questions. It seemed that the only thing the Bey had partaken of that day was his morning coffee, the nurse prepared it as usual (she or his mother when at home had latterly always made it for him). She found him asleep later than usual, and took it back to the kitchen, where several of the slaves were breakfasting, leaving the cup on the tray outside the kitchen-door. In about half an hour she made fresh coffee as she heard him call, and thinking he was in a hurry, she took up the tray quickly and filled his cup at once. Soon after he had drunk it, he began to complain to Osman (who had come to him) of severe and sudden symptoms of illness, giddiness, and pain, and burning in his head and hands. He told Osman to inquire if any one had come into the kitchen while the nurse was boiling the coffee. On careful inquiry, one of the black girls said she had seen a woman walking across the anteroom near the kitchen-door. She first thought it one of themselves, but, looking into the kitchen, found all were there but herself and the nurse. She looked all about, but could see no one, and then called to the boab. He confessed he had been asleep. How it was he slept so heavily as not to hear a stranger come in was amazing, for he was very faithful; but perhaps he had unconsciously had a little opium mixed in his beans that morning! The girl added, that on

thinking of the dress of the woman she had seen, it struck her that it was a man in disguise. She had an awkward way of walking that made her fancy it.

Eurydice told the lad to go for a German doctor to make sure, as she told Irene, "The lady will have to yield, for her doctor is very likely in the plot; he is not a man of high character, I have heard, though he is said to be clever. But if I am right, *this* is the remedy, and the *only* one, I think; but, pray, Sitt Irene, before we give it!"

They went to the Bey's room again, the Greek having taken out of her little bundle a small quantity of a dried plant, and macerated it in vinegar and water, while she was listening to the story. She then strained the liquid and begged him to swallow it, which he did without hesitation, then taking her hand, he said,

"Sister, I know it is Ahmed's work—poison! but if I die, God will—"

He could not finish; but sank back on his pillows. His mother had already suspected the worst, and with difficulty kept herself from sobbing and screaming aloud at finding her fears justified; but Eurydice respectfully and firmly entreated her not to agitate the Bey, and said,

"By God's mercy, this will cure in a little while, if the poison be what I imagine."

She went to look for the cup, and by good fortune it was still unwashed. The confusion caused by the

sudden attack had disconcerted the slaves, and no one had thought of carrying the tray to the kitchen. Irene put it on a shelf till the doctor should arrive, and they then knelt in the anteroom, the three women who believed, and she prayed shortly but earnestly. Poor Ain el Hayat could not remain long away from her husband; but the prayer seemed to comfort her, and inspired her with hope. She then went to him, and sat waiting for about half an hour, through which he seemed unconscious.

"Oh, Sitt Irene! call Eurydice again, I fear he is worse!"

"I don't want these Greeks about my son; what good has she done?" said the mother.

Eurydice looked in, but did not enter, "Have patience, lady, a little longer; I fancy he is easier, but you must wait and see."

An hour had passed before he opened his eyes; the German doctor was knocking at the door, and the ladies hastily veiled themselves. Zohrab smiled faintly, and said, "I am better, thank God!"

They both began to cry softly and murmur thanksgivings. Then the doctor entered; the case was quickly described to him by Irene, who talked French, with which he was more familiar than Arabic. He looked at the cup, and desired to take it to a chemist's to analyse the dregs properly; but from the account given he had little doubt that the conjecture of "Madame" was quite correct, and that the remedy

she had given had been an antidote; at least he added (for he did not like to let the woman think they could possibly have done without him):

"It has given us time to act. I will at once send something; and you must get hot water and some other matters."

After giving his directions he went out, promising to return in a few hours.

The analysis proved that Eurydice was quite correct, and information was sent to the proper quarter that an attempt had a second time been made on the Bey's life. But the man in authority could not be expected to take much trouble about a renegade, as he said, for Ahmed had taken care to give his information in time, and it seemed doubtful whether he was sorry at the attempt or at the failure, when the doctor, at the request of the family, sent the account by the secretary. Mrs. Hillyard, on receiving a note from her sister about the affair, went to the secretary and proposed to him to let them go together to give information, and endeavour to bring a charge against the suspected man, who of course was Ahmed. They went therefore to the chief of the local police, and told all they could collect. He replied, however, that he had already heard from his superior about it, and that it seemed there was nothing to go on beyond the account of a female slave; that slaves were all liars, and women were all foolish; and that he could not see why, as the Bey was declared out of danger, it was

necessary to take any step at all; probably it was only an attack of fever, or he had taken unwholesome food.

"They tell me," he added, "that the Bey is turned Christian; if so, he will not find the air of Cairo suit his health long, I expect;" and with a shrug he dismissed the application.

Mr. Hillyard then repaired to his friend's house, and as he was now sufficiently recovered to be moved to another room, he was allowed to see him. It was evening by this time, and the twelve hours of suffering had altered the young man sadly, but it was only temporary. The antidote proved successful; it was a plant of which the virtue against this kind of poison was a secret known to a few old women in Crete, who gave it with caution, and only revealed it to their families or near friends. Eurydice had learned it from her old servant, who had been one of those herbalist women, her family for several generations having practised the use of herbs, and among many that were perhaps useless were a few secrets worth knowing.

When her son was going to receive his friend, of course Sitt Fatmeh left him, and then going up to the former slave, she clasped her in her arms and wept on her neck, while expressing in broken words her thanks for her having saved her son. It was a great satisfaction to the deaconess to have thus been graciously permitted to be of such use to those who had been kind

to her, and to the young lady, above all, whom she loved devotedly, and who was now "one of the Lord's own," as she told Irene with tears of joy.

But mischievous tongues never will let people be good and happy, it seems, without meddling; and some interfering female had picked up the news at the wedding, probably through slaves, that Zohrab had refused to say the fatthah, and that all the people were saying he was turning Christian. This information she confided to Sitt Nezleh, in whose house she was staying after the festival, and of course added many little particulars of her own invention about the English lady bringing pork to the hareem, and Zohrab Bey being likely to be imprisoned in a few days. This last, though not true as yet, might become so, unhappily.

Nezleh, who had only heard a vague report of her brother's having been poisoned or ill of fever from one of his servants, hastened, in a state of fearful anxiety and anger, to the hareem as fast as a carriage could convey her, and entered with a rapid step behind the curtain just after Mr. Hillyard had arrived and was sitting by the Bey's sofa in his upper reception-room, apart from the hareem, and entered by a separate way, but on the same floor. The gentlemen therefore could hear the excited lady's voice, as she, after a hurried salutation, burst forth to her sister-in-law:

"So, this is what thou hast done, serpent! Persuaded my brother to turn Christian! No wonder

he has enemies, if that is it! Ah, woe, woe! cursed be the day!" and she screamed and danced in her rage and grief, while her tears ran down at the same time.

"It is not so, my sister," said the gentle Ain el Hayat, softly, "it is not so. My lord believes the Gospel, indeed; but it is not I who told him to do so."

"Who then? Who has corrnpted him? Is it not thy English friend, Sitt Irene, who brought Christian books here? Ah, deny it if thou canst, child of deceit!"

"I do not deny she gave me books, but it was with Zohrab's consent, and he read in them before he knew her."

"Who then has turned him? Answer me! Who has made a son of Islam to eat dust and desert his father's ways? Who has made him, I say, to be a Christian; canst thou not tell?" and she fairly stamped her little foot as she spoke.

"I can tell!" was the answer very calmly said.

"Speak then!" shaking her arm, in spite of her mother's remonstrances. "Speak and tell me."

"It was the Spirit of God," replied Ain el Hayat, solemnly.

Her sister-in-law paused; she was astonished and awed at the way in which the words were said, and for some time remained quietly wiping her eyes, and even sat down.

The mother then observed that she could not

believe God's Spirit made men Christians, *because*," she very logically said, "Christians are infidels, and God does not love infidels."

"But, mother, Zohrab is not an infidel, nor am I, nor are any real Christians," said Ain el Hayat. "True Christians are those who believe God sent Seidna Issa (the Moslem term for our Lord Jesus) into the world to save sinners, and that He is the Word of God Himself."

"Why, our Koran says He is the Word!" cried Nezleh; "of course that is true, therefore."

"But," continued the mother, "they do not believe that the Mohammed is the prophet of God, and that he is greater than Jesus."

"No, certainly," said her daughter-in-law, "for it is a mistake to believe that."

"Our Koran made a mistake! Child, thou art mad!"

"Mother! men wrote it, and men often mistake. God's book is inspired, and His Spirit cannot be wrong. Zohrab said these very words to me."

"Really, Ain el Hayat, you are too clever for me. I am of Islam, and have no other belief, nor will I have; but I see things are perhaps less bad than I supposed. Don't be angry with her, Nezleh; she is a good daughter and a good wife, I must say it; by the prophet's head, I tell no lies!"

She certainly told no lie in this, for her daughter-in-law had given the soft answer that turneth away

wrath every day and really every hour since her return from the Nile.

They both cried a little, and kissed each other, and then Nezleh by degrees became composed and ate an orange, and began to smile, though with a sorrowful look in her eyes all the time. By this time Mr. Hillyard had left, and she was summoned by the aga to her brother. He received her with affection, and begged her to stay the night, as he had much to say, and was too weak now to talk more. They brought him soup, and the doctor having seen him again and made a favourable report, left him to the care (as he said, pointing to Eurydice) of this old lady, "who seems to me a most capable nurse. I only wish I had half a dozen such to attend my patients."

CHAPTER XXV.

FAREWELL TO CAIRO.

"MY own love! I wished to see you alone before any one else is awake," was the greeting of Zohrab Bey to his wife when, at an early hour in the morning, she received a summons to go to him from the servant who had slept outside his door to keep watch.

She looked so sweet, he thought, as she came in fresh and bright from the joy following sorrow, and from the calm sleep that had rested those bright eyes that turned so lovingly towards him—her long silky brown locks hung loosely over her fur-lined open jacket of plum-coloured velvet, which had been thrown hastily over her wrapper of silver-grey cashmere; she had no ornaments, having only risen a short time before (and needed none).

Drawing near the sofa, where Zohrab reclined, wrapped in the scarlet and white striped Western Arab's blanket, as those beautiful desert-wove coverings are called, she asked after his health, and then seated herself at his feet to hear what he had special to say, for his look told her that something was of importance.

"You are quite recovered, my love?" she asked anxiously, finding he still hesitated.

"Oh, do not fear! Thanks to God's mercy all is well now; but, my wife, I want to speak to you before my mother and sister interrupt us. Listen, Ain el Hayat: thou has now drunk of the well of life. Is it not so?"

"And thou also, my Zohrab," she said, laying her head upon the hand that rested on the cushion beside her; "thou and I now know those words and their meaning."

"Then, love, we can give up the earthly stream, the sweet river of our youth, the Nile that we have dwelt beside so long, and go to a strange place, though it will be hard! but we can drink of the spiritual fountain everywhere."

"Must we go away from Egypt, from the Nile and the palm trees? Are you afraid the enemy who gave you the poison" (shuddering as she spoke) "will find you, and murder you, dearest?"

"I do not exactly say so, but I think the risk is great, and that the living in constant suspicion of every one, and watching for one's life, would destroy the very marrow in my bones. I saw Mr. Hillyard yesterday, as you know, but before my mother I would not repeat what he told me. He says, and my faithful secretary says the same, that it is evident they have determined not to protect or help me, and that they only refrain from bringing me before the

Government as a renegade from Islam for want of any distinct proofs; as they could not very easily base an accusation on what passed that night. A public baptism, we know, would at once have enabled them to apprehend me; but they have not enough to go upon as it is. There seemed a disposition to allow me time to leave Egypt quietly if I chose; but my friends assured me that they had reason to fear any secret attempt would be winked at, and even at the best, I might be misrepresented as a political traitor to Government. More than all, dear wife, I feel that I wish to be open and free and able to meet boldly with my Christian friends, and avow my views." (He felt also, but was wise enough not to name the feeling, that it would be good for *her* to be away from the trammels of the hareem and the dominion of his affectionate but tyrannical mother, at any rate for a time.) "Pray, my dear one, that God will give you courage to do what is right," he continued.

"It *is* right to obey my husband and go wherever he wishes," she said with tears in her eyes.

"Would you wish me to leave you and go alone?"

She threw herself into his arms at that.

"Ah, my Zohrab, to be with you I would even go to the Frank country!"

He smiled. "Not now, my love; perhaps one day, who knows? But at present, I only wish to go to Smyrna, where my friend, Mr. Freeman, is going to

spend the spring months with a relation of his, a merchant there. We will, by God's permission, take a house in Smyrna, and live quietly there; and after a while I hope to be able to go to my small property in Cyprus. It is said the English are going by-and-by to have possession of the island; it will then be quite safe for Christian converts; I wish it may be so for the sake of civilisation and the knowledge of the Gospel. I wish to see the British flag wave over Cyprus therefore, for the rule of Turkey closes the door to light; it has been the case for centuries, and I must wish more for the real good of man than for mere names. Let the English rule Cyprus, with all my heart, only let them do good to the adopted child, and make him a son in truth," he added smiling. "Meanwhile we will go to Smyrna. I have told my secretary to arrange the sale of my estate in the neighbourhood of Sitt Irene, it is the best, and we have already been invited to sell it. I fear their managing to get it confiscated, or that my brother, who is a good-for-nothing, poor youth, will get hold of it when I am not here; at all events, I could not secure it for you, in *case*—there do not cry; never mind! God will, I hope, preserve us for one another for long, if He sees good" (for Ain el Hayat could not without tears bear the allusion to the possibility of losing him). "Well the money will set me up as a tolerably rich merchant at Smyrna, and I shall be well employed; and if God should one day grant us children they would be

provided for; and, at all events, I may do good among the ignorant and poor, and by seeing some Christian friends and listening to the Gospel, improve ourselves."

"But I do not know their languages, Zohrab."

"There are perhaps some who preach in Turkish, which you know well, and I should like you to learn either English or French."

"Oh, English best, because of dear Sitt Irene; how sorry I shall be to part with her!"

"Perhaps one day she may come and see us in Cyprus, when we go there as I wish; but, Ain el Hayat, do not think I give up Egypt; oh no! God hears prayer, and will open a door for Egypt, I believe; when and how I cannot tell, but it *will* be open some day, and perhaps before very many years, and then—"

"Would you then return, Zohrab?"

"Surely, I would bring you back, love, if we were both alive. When that day comes that a man may profess Christ openly, and not be secretly poisoned, or thrown into a prison for it, then, surely, we would return. I can never love any land so dearly as my own; and you, dear one, though of foreign blood, art in heart a child of the country where all your life almost has been passed. Oh, if we can see the day when Egypt shall have a people in the midst of the land who know the Saviour, what a joy it will be! But, whatever happens, my wife, we two must be

faithful to Him who saved us, and gave us to drink of the water of life, and has taught us to say, like David, the prophet, 'With Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light.'"

CONCLUSION.

OUR tale is closing, the hareem curtain is being drawn, but we will take one look (like the hasty glance of a traveller on a railway) ere the view is shut out!

A year had passed since the last words were spoken between Zohrab Bey and his fair wife; Irene was bidding farewell for a short time to her friend and fellow-labourer, Eurydice, the Greek deaconess; and committing to her care the poor and sick, as well as the house at the Abbadeeh. She was going to spend a month or two at Smyrna, to welcome her sister Clara, who was to arrive shortly with her husband, no other than our old friend the Rev. Robert Freeman. They were just married, and were to pass the winter with his brother, the relative before-mentioned, who resided there, and who was now partner in merchant business with Zohrab. But there was another to be welcomed besides her sister. Irene was to be present at a baptism (a public one this time), that of the infant daughter of her beloved Ain el Hayat, by the special invitation of both the parents; yes, they were no longer childless now!

The grandmother, Sitt Fatmeh, was somewhat dis-

appointed that it was a daughter and not a son, but she hoped that blessing might one day be granted. She felt the separation much, but all who knew her were aware that it was better for both parties under the circumstances.

Ahmed was dead. He had received a large sum from Zohrab's brother when he made the attempt, that so nearly succeeded, on the Bey's life; but very shortly afterwards was found dead in his bed, it was supposed from a fit. But a few weeks afterwards his former accomplice, Ismael, opened a large tobacco shop in the Bab-el-Look; and, as he was quite poor previously, it was whispered that the coincidence was remarkable; however, no one interfered. The ungodly sometimes flourish for a time, but they are in slippery places, and will fall either in this world or the next, if not in both, though now they may seem like the green bay-tree, "While he whose delight is in the law of the Lord, shall be like the tree planted by the rivers of water, even by the fountain of life!"

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